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CYCLE GUIDE

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'84 HONDA PREVIEW

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★ *High-Performance Power-Touring*

NIGHTHAWK S

★ *The "S" Stands For Sleeper*

V30 MAGNA

★ *Vee-Four Midtown Missile*

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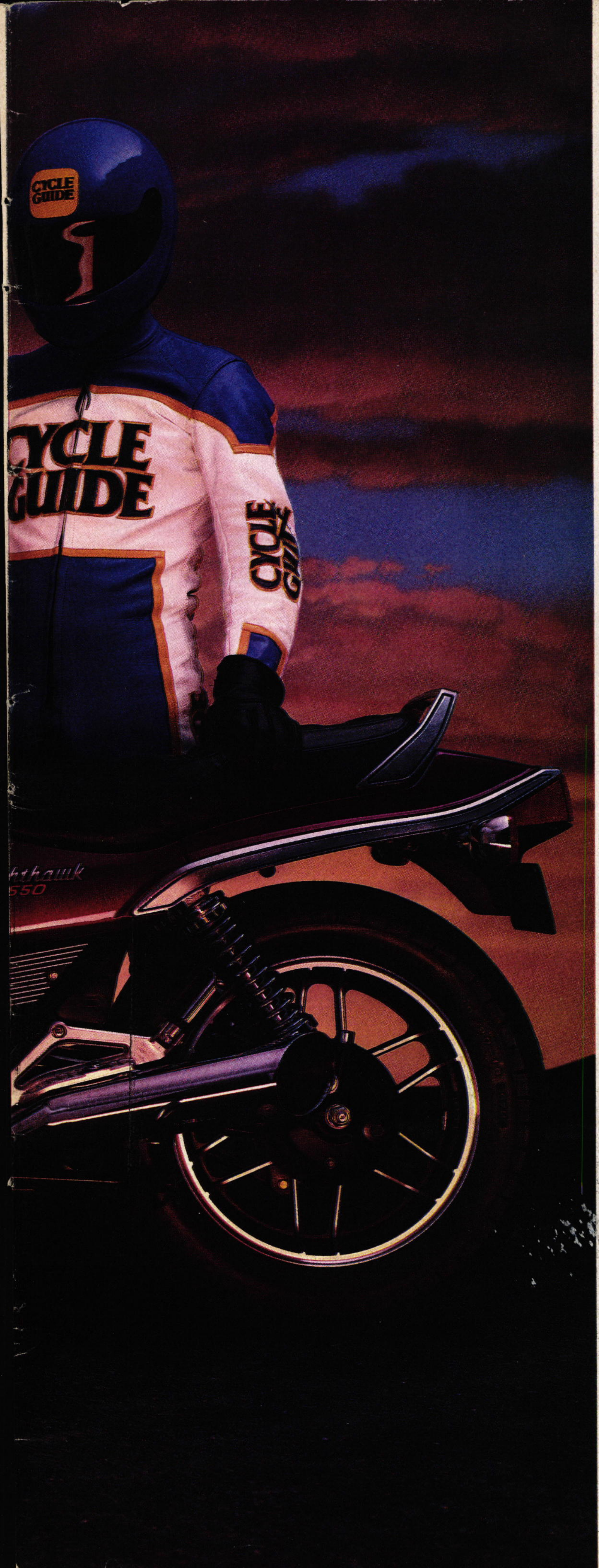

"THE WORLD'S QUICKEST 650"

—*Cycle Guide*/December '82

When the 1983 Nighthawk™ 650 was introduced, this is what the critics had to say:

"...double cam, 16-valve, six-speed engine, a 656 cc powerhouse that...is lighter and much more compact...a near perfect powerplant... corners like a bona fide sportbike...the closest thing to a no-maintenance motorcycle ever built..." —*Cycle Guide*/December '82

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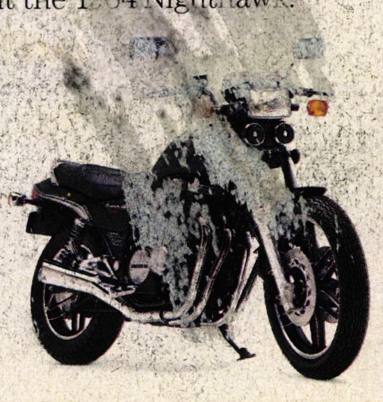

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FOLLOW THE LEADER

CYCLE GUIDE'S CYCLE GUIDE

Cycle Guide's catalog of recent test hardware—no brag, just fact.

OFF-ROAD

MAKE & MODEL	ISSUE	TYPE	ENGINE TYPE	WHEEL TRAVEL, IN. FRONT/REAR	WEIGHT, LBS.	RAKE/TRAIL, DEGREES/INCHES	GEARS
Cagiva WMX250-'84	January '84	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.9/12.7	221	28.0/4.65	6
Can-Am Sonic MX-'83	January '83	Motocross	Four-stroke	11.6/12.1	272	28.0/4.24	5
Honda ATC200X-'83	August '83	ATV	Four-stroke	7.2/6.2	285	N/A	5
Honda CR125R-'83	April '83	Motocross	Two-stroke	10.9/12.3	193	27.2/4.13	6
Honda CR250R-'84	December '83	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.7/12.2	216	26.7/4.13	5
Honda CR480R-'83	May '83	Motocross	Two-stroke	12.0/12.3	226	26.0/3.86	5
Honda XR350R-'83	June '83	Enduro	Four-stroke	10.9/10.4	253	26.0/3.94	6
Honda XR500R-'83	October '83	Desert	Four-stroke	11.0/12.2	278	25.5/3.94	5
Husqvarna 250 CR-'83	January '83	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.8/12.7	227	30.0/5.51	6
Husqvarna 430 WR-'83	June '83	Enduro	Two-stroke	10.4/10.6	246	30.0/5.98	6
Husqvarna 500 CR-'83	May '83	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.8/12.8	240	30.0/5.51	4
Husqvarna 500 XC-'83	October '83	Desert	Two-stroke	11.7/12.8	245	30.0/5.98	6
Kawasaki KDX200-'83	July '83	Enduro	Two-stroke	9.8/11.0	213	28.0/4.76	6
Kawasaki KDX250-'83	November '83	Enduro	Two-stroke	10.1/10.7	232	29.0/5.00	6
Kawasaki KX250-'83	September '83	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.8/12.1	224	28.5/4.65	5
Kawasaki KX500-'83	May '83	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.7/11.9	232	29.0/4.80	5
KTM MC 495-'83	May '83	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.9/12.4	249	28.0/4.21	4
Maico 490 Sand Spider-'83	October '83	Desert	Two-stroke	12.0/12.7	243	27.0/4.72	5
Maico 490 Spider-'83	May '83	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.8/12.2	240	27.0/4.72	4
Suzuki ALT50-'83	June '83	ATV	Two-stroke	N/A	90	N/A	1
Suzuki RM125-'83	October '83	Motocross	Two-stroke	10.7/11.8	200	29.5/4.76	6
Suzuki RM250-'83	February '83	Motocross	Two-stroke	10.7/12.4	219	29.7/4.84	5
Suzuki RM500-'83	May '83	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.9/12.8	234	29.7/4.84	4
Yamaha IT250-'83	November '83	Enduro	Two-stroke	11.0/11.3	233	28.0/4.65	6
Yamaha TT600K-'83	August '83	Trail	Four-stroke	11.7/10.8	280	28.0/4.65	5
Yamaha YZ250-'83	March '83	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.3/12.3	217	28.0/4.69	5
Yamaha YZ490-'83	May '83	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.8/12.5	227	28.5/4.72	4

STREET

MAKE & MODEL	ISSUE	ENGINE TYPE*	DISPLACEMENT, CC	QUARTER-MILE, SEC./MPH	TOP SPEED, MPH	WEIGHT, LBS.	FUEL CONSUMPTION, MPG	STOPPING DISTANCE FROM 60 MPH, FT.
BMW R100RT-'82	May '82	2C/G	979.9	13.862/95.13	126†	523	35–50	148
H-D FXRS Low Glide-'84	January '84	45 deg. 2D/F	1337.7	13.917/94.57	112	575	38–48	140
H-D FLH Classic-'82	August '82	45 deg. 2D/F	1337.7	15.467/82.04	101†	752	32–42	180
H-D XLS Roadster-'83	April '83	45 deg. 2D/F	997.6	13.842/93.94	106	515	43–55	138
H-D XLX-61-'83	June '83	45 deg. 2D/F	997.6	13.459/95.94	106	488	40–72	128
Honda CBX400F-'82	October '82	4A/F	399.1	13.588/96.46	110	402	34–58	128
Honda CB1100F-'83	January '83	4A/F	1062.2	11.224/119.84	144†	550	33–46	135
Honda CX650 Custom-'83	May '83	80 deg. 2E/G	673.5	12.560/102.97	119	454	38–48	124
Honda CX650 Turbo-'83	March '83	80 deg. 2E/G	673.5	12.093/111.66	137†	538	25–44	124
Honda FT500 Ascot-'82	August '82	1 B/F	497.7	14.915/83.72	97†	360	47–54	146
Honda GL1100A Aspencade-'83	February '83	4C/G	1085.0	13.515/96.05	152†	752	32–46	131
Honda Nighthawk 550-'83	July '83	4A/G	572.3	12.461/102.97	114	429	37–49	125
Honda Nighthawk 650-'83	December '83	4A/G	656.0	12.287/108.04	122	451	29–51	127
Honda V45 Interceptor-'83	May '83	90 deg. 4D/F	748.1	11.963/111.66	138	511	31–40	116
Honda V45 Magna-'82	June '82	90 deg. 4D/G	748.1	12.344/105.88	129	507	30–46	124
Honda V45 Sabre-'83	September '83	90 deg. 4D/G	748.1	12.179/111.11	128	514	33–46	130
Honda VF400F-'83	September '83	90 deg. 4D/F	399.1	13.588/96.35	112	402	34–51	127
Honda VT500 Ascot-'83	October '83	52 deg. 2D/G	490.9	13.628/93.75	112	411	41–61	129
Honda VT750C Shadow-'83	April '83	45 deg. 2D/G	749.6	12.906/100.78	127	484	48–55	132
Kawasaki GPz550-'83	June '83	4A/F	553.8	12.647/102.97	132†	438	42–62	144
Kawasaki GPz750-'83	February '83	4A/F	739.0	12.167/109.22	134†	498	35–51	136
Kawasaki GPz750 Turbo-'83	July '83	4A/F	739.0	11.225/123.53	146	514	N/A	N/A
Kawasaki GPz1100-'82	May '82	4A/F	1089.8	11.328/119.36	137†	534	35–48	127
Kawasaki KZ550 Spectre-'83	May '83	4A/G	553.8	13.348/96.77	116†	441	44–56	137
Kawasaki KZ750-L3-'83	January '83	4A/F	739.0	12.095/108.95	134†	487	47–53	132
Kawasaki KZ1000R-'82	November '82	4A/F	998.6	11.849/116.73	134†	505	35–49	129
Laverda RGS 1000-'84	December '84	3A/F	980.8	12.565/106.50	130	556	25–40	140
Suzuki GS450E-'83	January '83	2A/F	448.2	14.236/93.16	106†	384	39–49	131
Suzuki GS450G Automatic-'83	February '83	2A/G	448.2	16.412/82.34	94†	410	36–59	143
Suzuki GS550E-'83	June '83	4A/F	572.3	12.593/104.04	120	443	39–47	135
Suzuki GS650M Katana-'83	November '83	4A/G	673.9	13.238/101.01	122†	491	49–60	137
Suzuki GS750E-'83	August '83	4A/F	747.4	11.893/112.92	131†	485	35–50	135
Suzuki GS1100E-'82	May '82	4A/F	1074.9	11.203/119.30	141†	530	37–49	132
Suzuki GS1100G-'82	September '82	4A/G	1074.9	11.919/114.21	137†	555	42–48	138
Suzuki GS1100GK-'82	October '82	4A/G	1074.9	12.579/104.52	137†	647	31–44	155
Suzuki XN85 Turbo-'83	March '83	4A/F	673.9	12.381/107.14	132†	521	34–46	120
Yamaha RZ350-'83	December '84	2A/F††	347.4	13.343/98.46	112	346	N/A	N/A
Yamaha XJ650 Turbo-'83	March '83	4A/G	653.4	13.059/103.32	126†	543	35–53	126
Yamaha XJ900 Seca-'83	September '83	4A/G	853.2	11.949/113.20	128	499	34–58	135
Yamaha XS400 Seca-'82	December '82	2A/F	399.4	14.589/89.28	110†	382	47–57	140
Yamaha XZ550R Vision-'83	November '83	70 deg. 2D/G	552.9	13.422/95.23	112	483	39–47	124
Yamaha 920 Virago-'83	April '83	75 deg. 2D/G	920.0	12.835/101.46	108	503	38–45	138
Yamaha Venture Royale-'83	November '83	70 deg. 4D/G	1197.6	12.662/102.73	124	739	29–44	153

***A**-Transverse Vertical, **B**-Vertical (single-cylinder only), **C**-Horizontally Opposed, **D**-Tandem Vee, **E**-Transverse Vee, **F**-Chain Final Drive, **G**-Shaft Final Drive, **H**-Belt Final Drive
† indicates a calculated top speed; †† indicates a two-stroke engine

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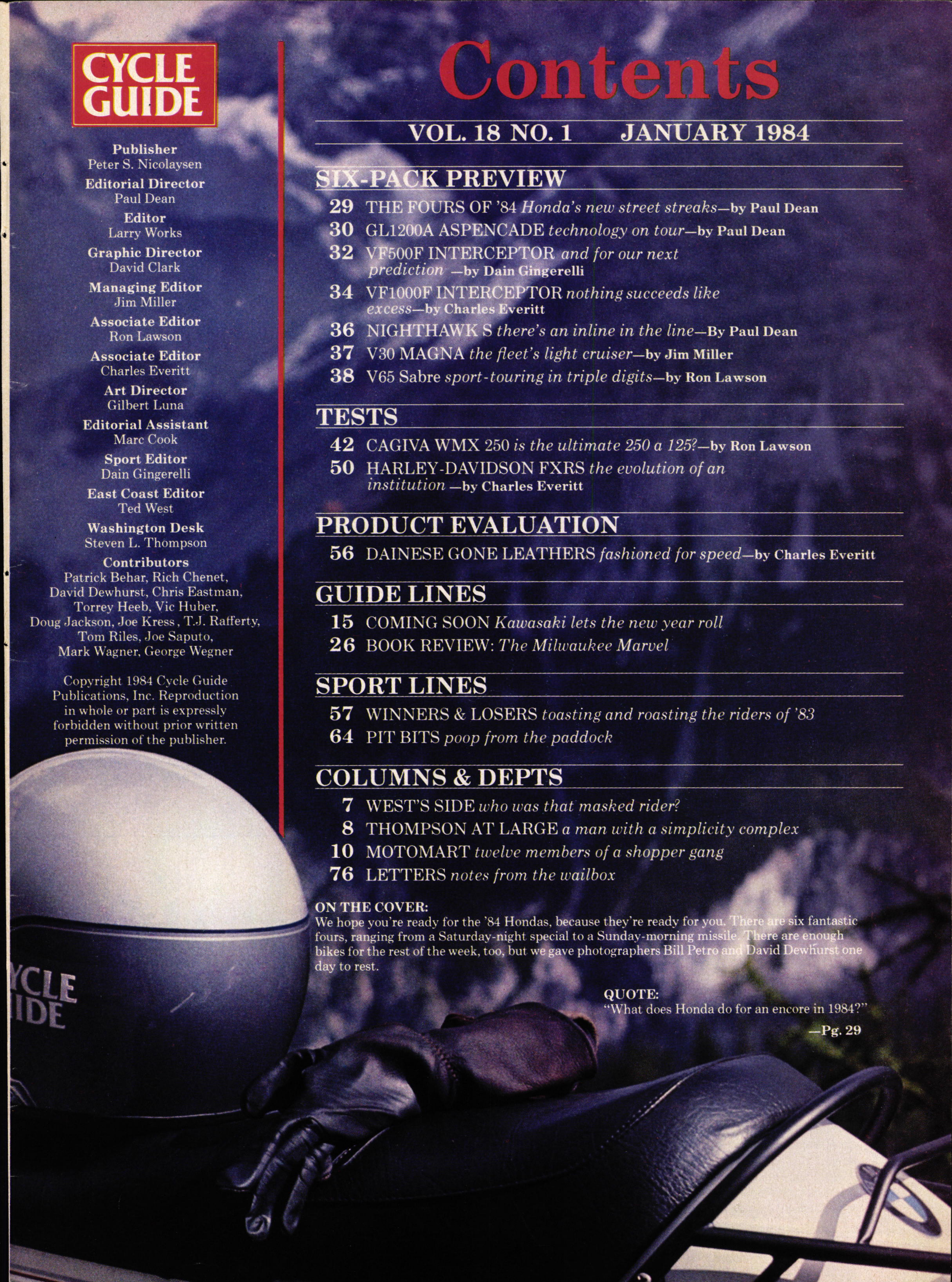

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ON THE COVER:
We hope you're ready for the '84 Hondas, because they're ready for you. There are six fantastic fours, ranging from a Saturday-night special to a Sunday-morning missile. There are enough bikes for the rest of the week, too, but we gave photographers Bill Petro and David Dewhurst one day to rest.

QUOTE:
"What does Honda do for an encore in 1984?"
—Pg. 29

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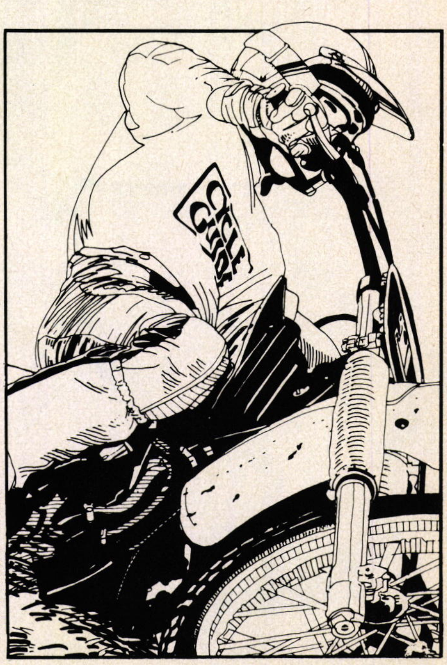

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West's Side

The Alone Ranger Rides Again

One's company, two's a crowd. . . .

• The problem has never been clearer. I was headed up to Lake Placid through the magnificent, rolling country of Upstate New York, and the closer I got, the more obvious it became.

My destination was the 1983 National Rally of a certain well-known marque of flat-opposed two-cylinder German motorcycles. I was riding one of these relatively rare bikes myself, so inevitably, every time I saw another of them, I knew damn well that it was headed for the same destination. Furthermore, the owners of this particular marque being the sort of people they are, every fellow rider I saw would wave, flash lights, do everything short of leaping off his bike at speed to say hello.

All well and good.

The problem was, since we were all going to the same place—and apparently taking the same route getting there—why not ride together in caravan?

Why not, indeed. On the face of it, it wasn't merely reasonable; it seemed *unavoidable*. And yet, and yet. . . .

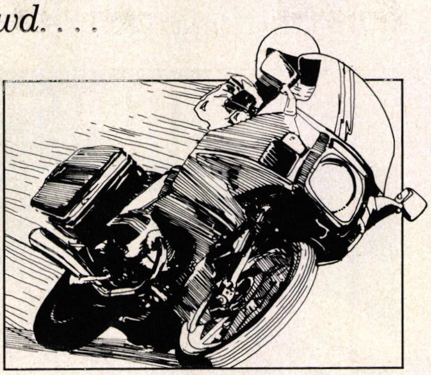
After riding practically non-stop all day, I'd pulled off the road for a break and a soft ice cream. And as I sat there, a guy and a gal on a pair of these same well-known two-cylinder motorcycles came in for a landing and a soft ice cream of their own. We exchanged howdy-where-y'froms. We admired the bikes. We licked ice cream.

After a spell, they took off and, quite intentionally, I realize now, I found myself milling around the parking lot for five or ten minutes, killing time. I hoped they were fast riders, I hoped they were *lightning*-fast riders . . . because, see, I didn't want to so much as lay eyes on them again until Lake Placid.

It had nothing at all to do with them personally, of course. It's more elemental than that. I don't know where the impulse comes from in me or why it's so stupefyingly powerful, but I simply *despise* sharing the freedom of the road with people I don't know very, *very* well.

I saddled up finally, taking as long as possible to put on my helmet and gloves, topped up the tank though it didn't need it . . . did everything I could to let those two utterly pleasant riders up ahead *get the hell off my road*.

And by now I figured they had a good fifteen minutes on me. So feeling untrammeled once again, I went back to work wringing every last erg of pleasure I could out of my bending, sweeping, Thursday-afternoon-empty Upstate mountain road. I'm not saying that, the gauntlet having been thrown down in earnest, you couldn't ride faster than I, not at all . . . but I *am* saying I was going quickly. It's not a point of honor with me, but rather, of pleasure. When I see open road ahead and no traffic, my right hand just automatically finds the jolly-spot on the twistgrip.



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And in no time—which in "motorcycle time" means the unmeasurable quantity of pleasure that passes riding fast and alone before something forces you to slow down—I began to see those same two riders bending into the next sweeper ahead. My immediate reaction was that short Anglo-Saxonism we don't print in this magazine. I have no idea how long it'd taken to catch up, but now I had to choose between passing them like a yahoo, or falling in line like a police escort on a toxic-waste convoy.

Which isn't to say they were going unreasonably slow or doing anything the least bit unsatisfactory. That's the whole point. It's not that they were wrong, simply different. And damned if I'd change my riding to suit them.

The solution was simple, of course—grab some more twist and go past.

Yet—and I don't know if you'll understand this—in the circumstances, the three of us headed for the same huge convocation, this choice seemed too . . . just too . . . the Canadians among us would say, "cheeky."

But the closer we came, the more pressing became the decision. At first, I decided to do *nothing*. I'd act like a grown-up, ride with them awhile—which I did for three or four miles.

Uh-huh. They were the three or four most excruciating miles—including even the twenty-minute traffic jam two hours back—of the entire ride. Don't ask me why, but having my pace on a bike dictated by another rider just flat kicks the breath out of me! It's something a solid-citizen car-guy wouldn't understand at all, and given the straight-and-level nature of most driving, perhaps that's as it should be. But for me, at least, the connection between riding motorcycles and *sport* is just too direct. When I'm on the open road and there is no clear, overriding need to concede my pace, the instinct for sport, for peak-level recreation, fairly *shrieks* at me to ride exactly as I please.

So after those three or four torturous miles, with what I hoped was a reasonably non-yahoo wave, I pulled ahead. From then on until Lake Placid, I religiously avoided falling in with anyone else. Yes, it felt a bit odd zapping long lines of cross-country tourers—it felt a bit odd, and now, a bit essential.

But it wasn't until the next afternoon munching a Mac-Refuse at the local 90 Billion Sold with a guy from Pittsburgh that I began to get some leverage on the subject. Gradually, our conversation turned to matching up with other riders and, lo, this guy had an interesting tale to tell. Mid-way from Pittsburgh the previous afternoon he'd fallen in with some riders headed for Lake Placid. Within minutes, he said, something happened in his head. It wasn't that the others were riding "wrong," but suddenly all he could think of was whether they were going too fast or too slow, whether he was riding too close or lagging behind. The ride had become a question of ethics, decorum, good manners. He'd been able to stick it out for an hour, he said, before he turned off and waited a half hour by himself. Then he looked at his map and set out again, very purposefully using another route entirely.

Sound familiar?

Maybe not. Maybe you like caravans. In the right circumstances, riding with people I enjoy, sometimes I do, too.

But even in the best of times, a caravan generates tension in me. I want to break free, to have nothing on my mind except my own bike and the "motorcycle time" we two share. No denying it, on a bike I'm the Alone Ranger, always have been. And if it's all the same with you, Tonto, I'll meet you up the road a bit . . . say, at the end of the day. —*Ted West*

Thompson at Large

The Speedway Syndrome

Losing the point in search of the cutting edge.

• The voice on the phone was one I hadn't heard in a long time. It belonged to a former colleague, a car magazine writer renowned for his caustic wit, superb writing and driving skill.

"Rumor has it," the voice said, "you bought a new bike."

"Yep," I said.

"Rumor says it's a BMW."

"Yep."

Pause.

"Not the *new* one—the inline four."

"Nope."

Pause again.

"An *old* one?"

"Check. R100RS."

Another pause. I knew by now where this was going.

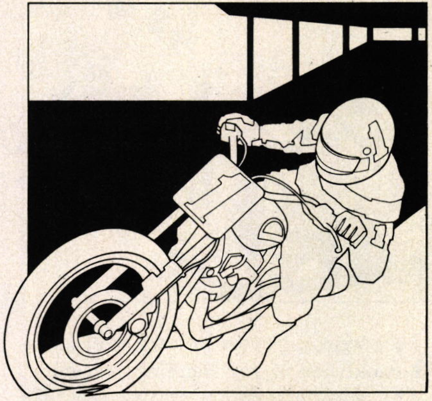
"But . . . why'd you buy the *wrong* one?"

I leave the rest of the conversation to your imagination. As you'd expect, it was short and sweet. I'd had plenty of practice at it; ever since I'd bought the RS, a fairly steady flow of calls just like the one above reminded me, over and over, that the Speedway Syndrome was alive and well, even among the ranks of those who ought not, because of their profession and positions, be susceptible to it. I should have known better.

I learned about the Syndrome in England, where my friend Jim Rohn helped me both discover the affliction and cure it. Neither evolution was easy.

I'd never had to delve too deeply into speedway to figure out why it bored me, before I met Rohn. It was because the machinery bored me. Like many another GP racer, I considered my pursuit the real soul of motorcycling, where new technical horizons constantly were crossed, where the excitement of competition was enhanced by the potential for engineering development. Speedway, on the other hand, seemed to be populated by stone-age devices like stick drawings of real motorcycles, the cave-wall scrawlings of demented aborigines.

But Rohn was no abo, and his Hagon-JAP was no stick bike. It was a purpose-built bolide that I came to know well as I occasionally pitted for him and helped him with its few quirks throughout the '71 grasstrack and speedway season. When he first rolled the spindly device into our Thetford, Norfolk race garage, it looked absurd next to my rotary-valved 350 Shepherd Kawasaki GP bike. It began to look less and less absurd as the season wore on and my patience for the fragility of the Shepherd wore out. In short, Rohn raced and won, while I raced and broke. Soon, Rohn was invited to ride for the Peterborough city team—a singular honor for a Yank who fought, rather than bought, his way into that sport's hard-bitten elite. The message was not lost on me: Although speedway restricted its participants in the specifications of their mounts, in the final and most ruthless analysis, it was, in effect, no different from the game in which I rode (and broke). Thanks to the 1967 FIM edict banning exotic GP hardware, I was no more pushing any design or development frontiers than was Rohn. Thus I realized the nature of the Speedway Syndrome, which commands that those under its spell imagine that the only worthwhile machinery is that which is at the cutting edge, and thus the only worthwhile pursuits are those which help push the edge further out.



© 1984 MARK R. WAGNER

This is, of course, utter nonsense, although the Syndrome in many subtle variations seems to infect most of us at one time or another, my car-magazine pals included. Quite apart from the hopelessly foolish and embarrassingly unfounded prejudices that underlie it is the central issue of what the devil a cutting edge actually *is* in motorcycling, and where it might lie. Because of the limitations built in by regulations in all forms of racing, fundamental design breakthroughs are not likely to emerge from any classes currently extant. This flies in the face of "racing improves the breed," of course, but any serious look at events since the famous FIM ban on "exotic" hardware proves the point. The most successful post-ban GP bike has been the Yamaha TZ750, and what breakthroughs has *it* given us?

Five years ago, Len Setright underlined the point in the pages of this magazine, by way of a story called, "The Elf Experiment." Setright was the perfect man to do the piece, since he had been attempting for years to persuade major manufacturers to abandon what he termed "mere motorized bicycles" to produce something at least marginally modern. The Elf X, designed by Andre de Cortanze, was mildly advanced in its approach to systems modernization, but was soon consigned to oblivion, partly, perhaps, by the very social forces described by Setright in his story, forces that seem to drive us to revere a "good old wrestle" with an absurdly overpowered and underthunk device while shunning genuinely new concepts. We genuflect for new combinations of old engineering, predictably imagining another valve or cam here or there, another few inches of tire, another radiator, another application of fuel injection or Rocket Boy fiberglass to be innovation. And thus mesmerized by herding the ever-faster hardware around, we confuse complexity with the cutting edge, and all too easily succumb to the smug snobbery of the Speedway Syndrome.

Frankly, living inside the Syndrome is a lot easier than outside it. Inside it, you can use simple yardsticks to measure motorcycles; good ones are the fastest, or latest, or most complicated. And bad ones are like speedway bikes. But outside the fold of the Syndrome, you must come to grips with each machine on its own terms. In this regime, you are not free to substitute fantasy for fact, and you are led to some conclusions that others might not—probably *will* not—understand or share. This process has led me, since that season in '71, to the belief that, in motorcycles, *more* of anything, from horsepower to accessories to weight, rarely makes anything better. And that more or less inevitably led me to my latest purchase, and the equally inevitable phone calls.

I never tell any of this to the guys who call. I figure that if they ride long and hard enough, they'll figure it out for themselves. But by then, of course, I hope to be on something other than a motorized bicycle. —*Steve Thompson*

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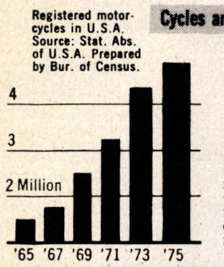
Cycles are big business

Registered motorcycles in U.S.A. Source: Stat. Abs. of U.S.A. Prepared by Bur. of Census.



Motorcycle registration increased by nearly 300% in the ten years from 1965 to 1975. And there were over 5 million cycles registered last year — and they all require maintenance.

Motorcycle Shops Employ Qualified Mechanics. Has your bike ever been out of action waiting for needed repairs? Some shops don't have enough mechanics to take care of everyone as fast as they like.

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Your Future is in Your Own Hands—You can decide for yourself whether you want to work for someone else or get into your own cycle repair business. Start in your spare time repairing cycles at home—or get a job with a motorcycle shop! After you've been a working mechanic, you can decide whether you want to start your own repair business.

You'll Be the Center of Attraction in Your Circle of Friends—Enjoy the admiration of friends and neighbors as they flock around to watch you tear down and tune up all kinds of motorcycles. And just think of the satisfaction in knowing you've got the best performing bike in town. Plus, you can make extra dollars fixing motorcycles for friends, neighbors.

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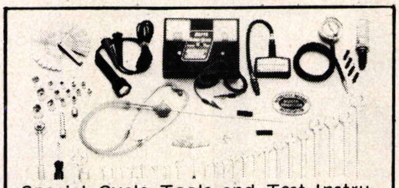
Rush FREE color brochure and full information on how I can learn Motorcycle Repair.


Special Cycle Tools and Test Instruments included to start you fast! We teach you how to use wrenches, sockets, impact screwdrivers, timing lights, compression gauges, vacuum gauges, degree wheels, wrench sets and much, much more. These are yours to use during your training . . . and yours to keep in your action packed career as a motorcycle mechanic.

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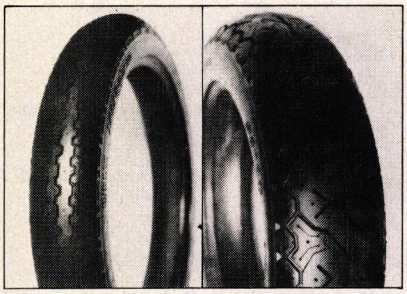
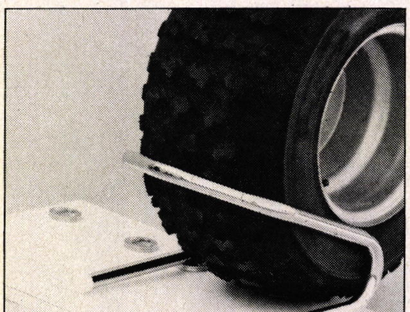
Motomart

Saying good buy to a new year.

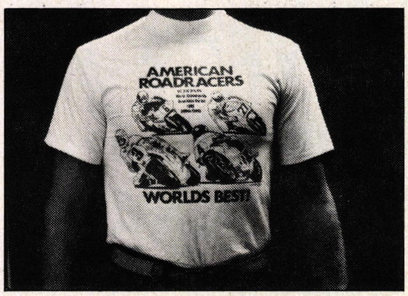


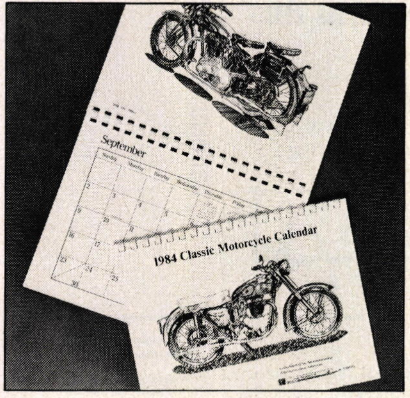
Taiwan On: You don't tie them, actually, you inflate them, but the Lien Shin S-200 Sport Touring tires offer features that might interest sport-touring riders. These four-ply nylon tires are H-rated, and are designed for use with or without tubes. Lien Shin claims the tread pattern dissipates heat quickly and helps prevent hydroplaning, while offering maximum adhesion and long wear. Front tires are available in 18- or 19-inch diameters, with prices ranging from $33.75 to $38.02. Rear tires range in price from $52.06 to $61.88 in 16-, 17- and 18-inch diameters. For more information, contact M.A.P. Enterprises Inc., Dept. CG, 7165 30th Ave., St. Petersburg, Florida 33710.

Father Chock: No, you don't use it to hold up the old man, but you can use Super Flow's new Pop Chock to hold your motorcycle or ATC in place in a trailer, pickup or van. The Pop Chock slips into two permanently mounted latches in a truck bed or on a trailer, to provide a removable mount for the front wheel. The steel-tubing mount is available in black or chrome, in three sizes: ATC, motocross or superbike. The Pop Chock has a suggested retail price of $29.95, and is available from Super Flow Headers, Dept. CG, 1660 Market St., Corona, California 91720.

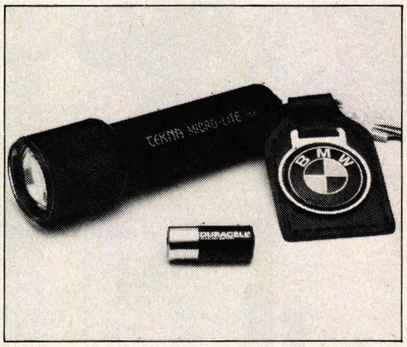


American Export: Some of our best goodwill ambassadors have never seen the inside of an embassy, choosing instead to do their bit for the country on a racetrack. Americans Freddie Spencer, Kenny Roberts, Randy Mamola and Eddie Lawson swept the top four positions in the 1983 GP roadracing season, and to commemorate that feat, CYCLE GUIDE illustrator Torrey Heeb has created an "American Roadracers" T-shirt. The shirt, which includes illustrations of all four racers, is available in S, M, L, and XL, and can be purchased for $8.50 plus $1.50 for postage and handling. To order, contact Torrey Heeb, Dept. CG, 728 Mendocino Ave., Santa Rosa, California 95401.



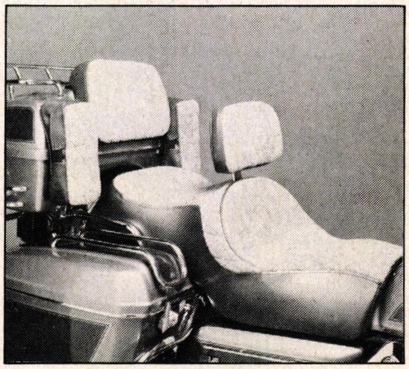


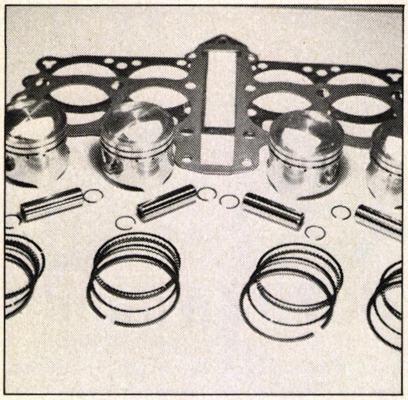
The Classics of '84: Keeping track of the days until your bike becomes a classic is no problem with a Classic Motorcycle Calendar from Jamiol's World. The calendar features 12 illustrations of classic bikes from the pencil of illustrator Paul Jamiol, and includes machines from Excelsior, Harley-Davidson, Sunbeam, Triumph, BSA and seven other manufacturers. The limited-edition 1984 calendar has a suggested retail price of $4.50, including postage and handling, and can be purchased from Jamiol's World, Dept. CG, P.O. Box 281, Winchester, Massachusetts 01890.



Light Light: Most modern motorcycles have excellent headlights, but not the kind you can carry in your pocket. Instead, you can use a Micro-Lite from Tekna. The Micro-Lite is small enough to carry in a coat pocket, tankbag, or even on a keychain. The Lexan lens and polycarbonate body are claimed to be waterproof to a depth of 2000 feet, and the lens can be removed and used as a 2.5-power magnifier. Tekna's Micro-Lite uses two "N" batteries (not included) and has a suggested retail price of $6.95. For more information, contact Tekna, Dept. CG, P.O. Box 2363, Menlo Park, California 94025.

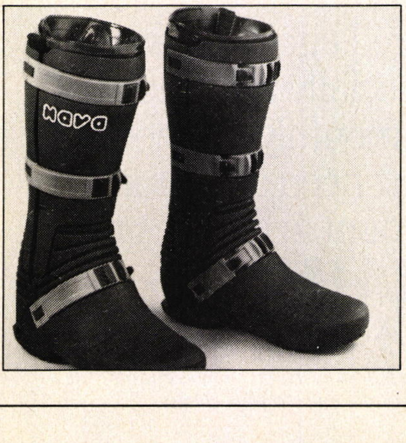
Better Than Doan's Pills: Backaches are a drag on tour, but Drag Specialties can help Gold Wing owners avoid back pain. Drag Specialties' Wingleader Backrest Seat includes a built-in pivoting backrest that's adjustable to three heights. DS claims the seat uses stock mounting hardware, and is constructed of a density-controlled foam on a lightweight plastic base. The vinyl-and-cloth cover is available in brown, black, grey or burgundy. Suggested retail price for the seat is $299.95, and includes a raincover. For more information, write to Drag Specialties, Dept. CG, 5401 Smetana Drive, Minnetonka, Minnesota 55343.



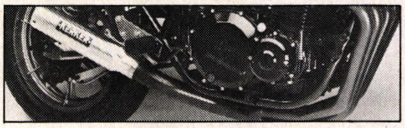


Boring GPzs: Riders who've become jaded with their Kawasaki GPz550s' performance can pump up the excitement factor with a big-bore kit from Champion Moriwaki. The kit includes pressure-cast pistons, rings, circlips, wrist pins and head and base gaskets. Moriwaki's kit increases the little GPz's displacement to 593cc and bumps the compression ratio up to 11:1. The big-bore kit has a suggested retail price of $275, and is available from Champion Moriwaki U.S.A., 1980 Harbor Blvd., Costa Mesa, California 92627.

Head To Foot: Nava has gone from one extreme to the other by introducing a pair of off-road racing boots to complement its line of helmets. The Pro-Flex boots are claimed to offer the protection of hard-plastic boots and the flexibility, comfort and control-feel of leather boots. In addition, Nava states the boots are rebuildable; parts can be purchased separately, and replaced using only a screwdriver. The Pro-Flex boots come in sizes 7–12 for a suggested retail price of $149.95, and are available from Nava USA, Dept. CG, 5729 Ward Ave. Virginia Beach, Virginia 23455.

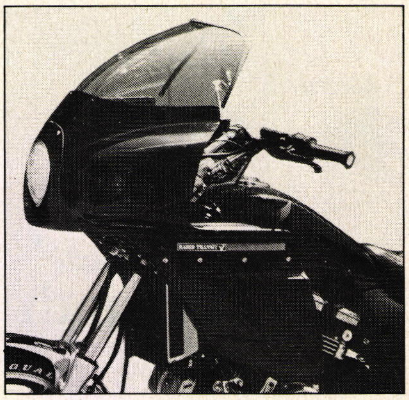


Exhausting Options: If you're tearing your hair out trying to find a new exhaust system, take a look at the K2 or K2S systems from Kerker. Kerker claims the exhausts give improved performance and provide as much as a 20-pound weight advantage compared to stock exhaust systems. The K2 is designed for racing only, and features a small baffle in an aluminum silencer. The K2S uses the same style silencer in a street-legal system, and allows centerstand retention and oil-filter and drain-plug access, Kerker claims. The K2 is available for Honda's CB1100F, Sabre and Interceptor, Kawasaki's GPz1100, 750 and 550, as well as the KZ900 and KZ1000, and Suzuki's GS750E/ES and GS1100E/ES. The K2S systems are available for the GPz1100 and 550, and the Suzuki GS550. For more information, contact, Kerker, Dept. CG, 7900 Deering Ave., Dept 58, Canoga Park, California 91304.



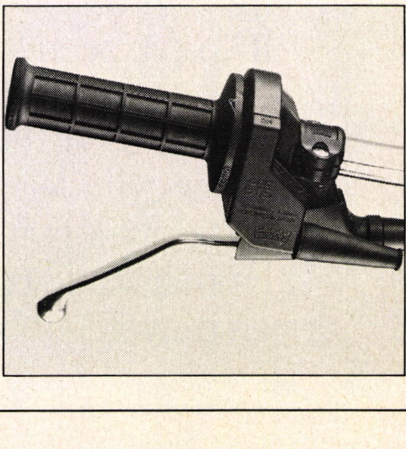
Suzuki
Motocross

The Shirt Off Their Back: Cover your body with one of Good Ideas' T-shirts. They're available in long- or short-sleeve style, long-sleeve with hood, or as a tank top, and in four colors: white, yellow, turquoise or lavender. "Honda," "Yamaha," "Suzuki," "Kawasaki," "Motocross," or "3-wheeling" logos are available, and any color, logo or shirt style can be combined. Suggested retail prices are $11.95 for the tank tops or short-sleeve shirts, $19.95 for the long-sleeve style and $22.95 for the hooded long-sleeve variety. To find out more, contact Good Ideas, Dept CG, 2813 Newport Blvd., Newport Beach, California 92663.



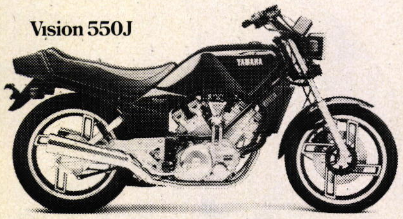
Mad Magnas: Don Vesco Products Inc. has adapted its Rabid Transit to Honda's potent V65, so Magna owners can part the wind with something other than their faces. Vesco claims the fiberglass fairing allows retention of the stock handlebars and mirrors, and improves both fuel economy and top speed. The Vesco fairing has a retail price of $551.95 and includes a mounting kit, windshield and lowers. For more information, contact Don Vesco Products Inc., Dept. CG, 7565 North Ave., Lemon Grove, California 92045.

Ever Try To Push One? Pulling on a throttle cable is the accepted way to make a bike accelerate, and Magura's 314 Strait-Pull throttle can help. The throttle is made of reinforced polycarbonate, and Magura claims it's sealed against dirt and moisture. Magura claims the 314's throttle-turn can be changed quickly from 91 degrees to 103 degrees, and the cable can be disconnected without disassembling the housing. Suggested retail price is $16.48, and it's available from Rocky Cycle Co. Inc., Dept. CG, 1250 Elco Drive, Sunnyvale, California 94086.



Nine Yamahas anybody can handle.

Vision 550J



$61.42 a month

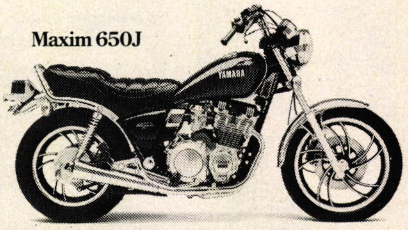
*Monthly payments based on: Suggested retail price, $1999. Typical down payment, $300. 18% Annual Percentage Rate. Term, 36 months.**

Virago 500K

$67.92 a month

*Monthly payments based on: Suggested retail price, $2179. Typical down payment, $300. 18% Annual Percentage Rate. Term, 36 months.**

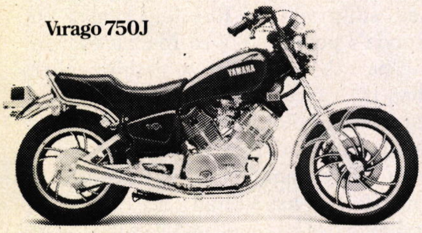
Maxim 650J



$67.92 a month

*Monthly payments based on: Suggested retail price, $2179. Typical down payment, $300. 18% Annual Percentage Rate. Term, 36 months.**

Virago 750J



$80.94 a month

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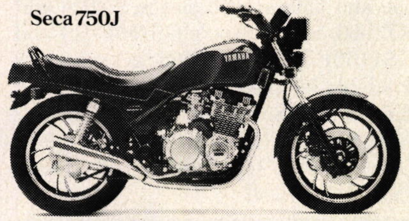
Seca 750J



$84.19 a month

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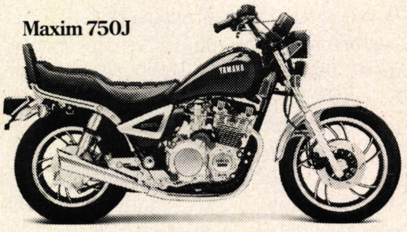
Maxim 750J



$88.53 a month

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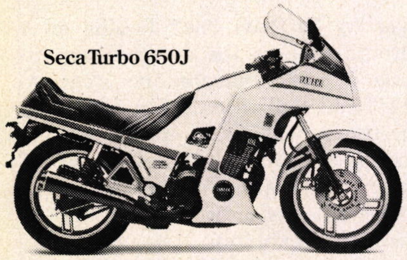
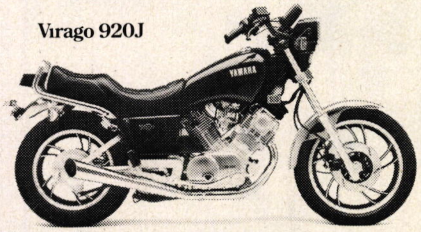
Seca Turbo 650J



$92.15 a month

*Monthly payments based on: Suggested retail price, $2999. Typical down payment, $450. 18% Annual Percentage Rate. Term, 36 months.**

Virago 920J



$92.15 a month

*Monthly payments based on: Suggested retail price, $2999. Typical down payment, $450. 18% Annual Percentage Rate. Term, 36 months.**

Midnight Maxim 750K

$101.18 a month

*Monthly payments based on: Suggested retail price, $3299. Typical down payment, $500. 18% Annual Percentage Rate. Term, 36 months.**

If you've been looking for a good excuse to buy a bike, here are nine of them. Everything from four-cylinder road burners to shaft-drive V-twin cruisers.

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GUIDE LINES

Cycle Guide's Monthly Chronicle of Scoops, Tips, Rumors and Hard Facts

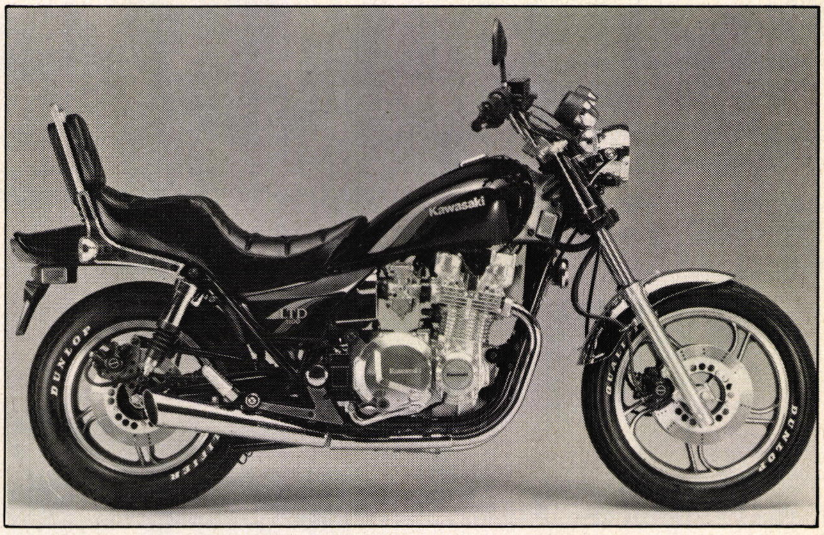
BY JOE KRESS

COMING SOON

- The Rumors of '83 rapidly are becoming the hardware of '84. Riding impressions of the new Hondas (see "Six All-New Hondas," page 29) include the downsized Interceptor we predicted as one example. Here's another: Kawasaki's all-new, KL600 big-thump dual-purpose bike. The big KL joins the lineup with a 564cc four-stroke single, liquid-cooling and dual counterbalancers. And Kawasaki is claiming a dry weight of just 286 pounds for this half-liter-plus d/p machine, a favorable tip of the scales compared to all the other on/off-road competition. The jury is still out, however, on just how the KLR's weight placement will affect this twin-cam, twin-radiator-equipped four-stroke when it jumps that first curb and heads off into the dirt.
- No such off-road antics are planned for the 1100 LTD, though. This is Kawasaki's top-of-the-line street cruiser, extensively restyled for '84 in "American Sports" standard. Besides the obviously new tank and sidecover graphics to catch your eye, a revised seating position means that this year's 1100 LTD pilot rides a little closer to the pavement, too. And with the bike's new forward-mounted pegs, he'll be stretched out a bit more, while scanning the machine's simplified and downsized instrument cluster. The 1100 LTD, complete with its bobtail rear fender, is one of the big-bore bikes Kawasaki now plans to produce in Lincoln, Nebraska.
- Kawasaki's '84 700 LTD won't get that "Made in U.S.A." stamp, though, but it doesn't need it to get by the ITC tariff: This 694cc street cruiser slips in right under the new tariff's displacement-cutoff point. But this bike is shipped into the U.S. with the same lowered-seat and forward-peg riding position, the same tank/sidecover/rear-fender restyle and the same downsized gauges as its bigger, liter-plus garagemate.
- And last year's straightforward—but hardly boring—KZ750-L3 is back for those in the market for a no-nonsense, back-to-basics '84 performance fix. Almost back, that is: This near-remake of the '82 GPz also has the new Kawasaki 694cc inline-four powering it, a tariff-skirting powerplant based on the old reliable twin-cam, eight-valve 750.
- There are no big surprises from Kawasaki for the musclebike crowd. Not much has been done to Kawasaki's image-making GPz1100 for '84—other than to transfer its production to Lincoln, Nebraska. But that fuel-injected big-bore four does have a few new twists this time around, the biggest coming from the paint department. This year the GPz1100, just like all the other GPz models, is offered in two colors: either the familiar Firecracker Red or a new iridescent silver.

The KL600 puts Kawasaki in the big-thump dual- purpose business

Opening shop with a liquid-cooled four-valve single.



The 1100 LTD big-bore street cruiser has plenty of new parts for '84

And one of them is a "Made in U.S.A." sticker.

And that stay-with-a-winner philosophy also applies to the '84 GPz750. Other than the silver paint option and a slightly raised handlebar, the three-quarter-liter GPz is largely unchanged from last year's version.

- The same doesn't apply to the GPz550, though. This middleweight received the lion's share of GPz series revisions and updates for

Continued

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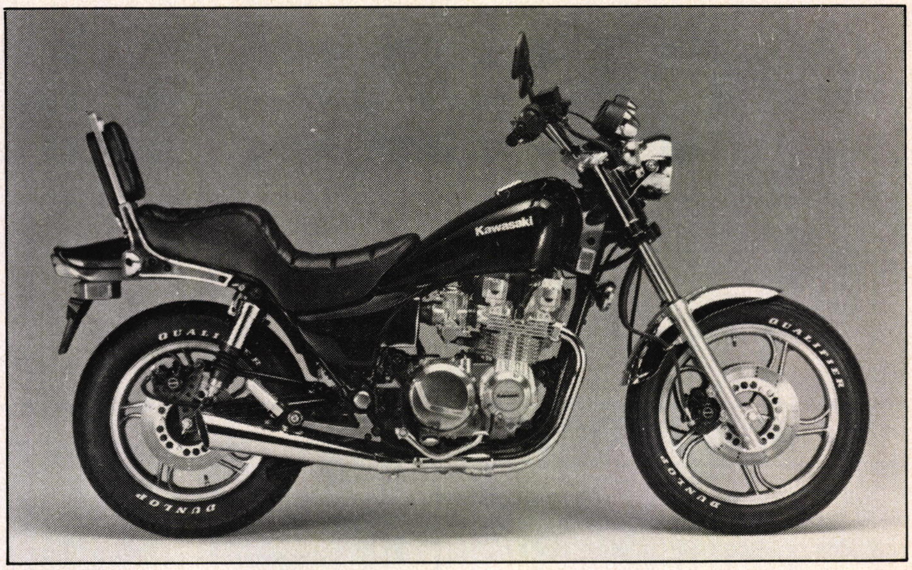
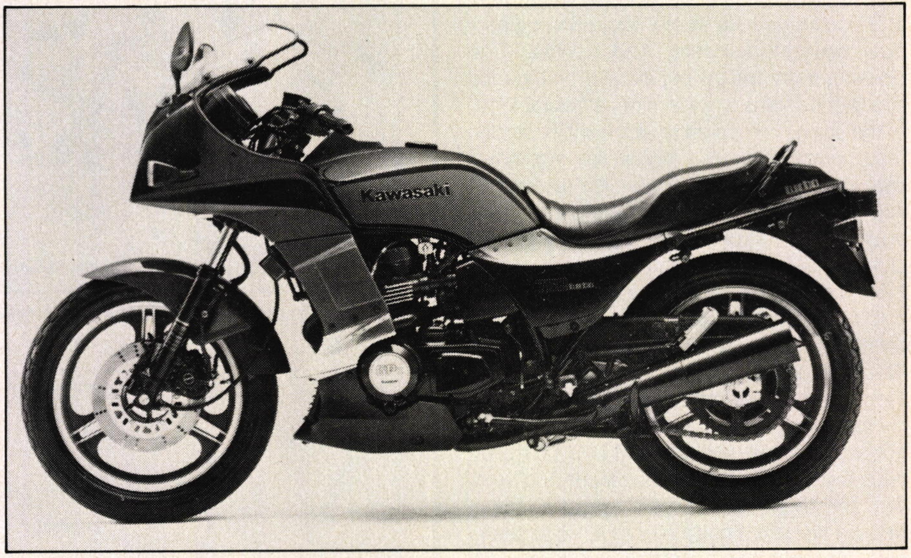


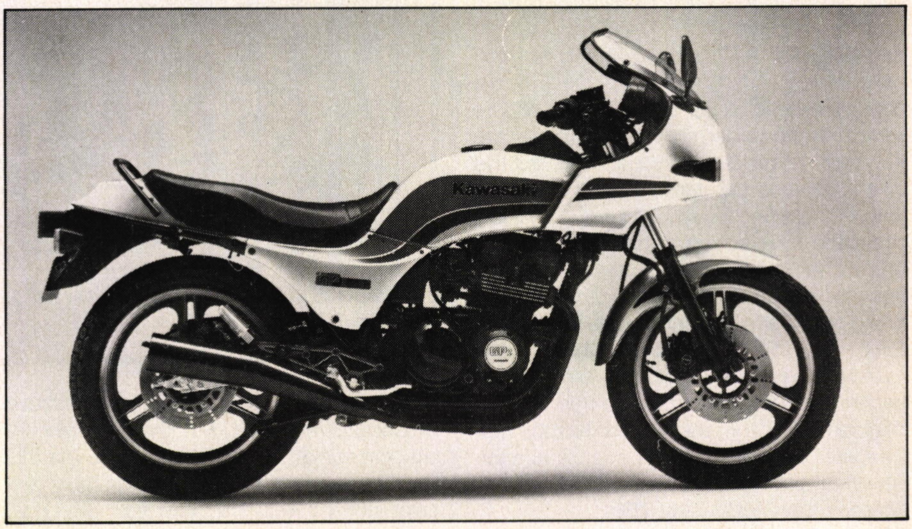
The 700 LTD has a new mean-streets look to go with its lowered riding position

And it's all pushed along by 694cc of tariff-skirting transverse-four.



In late-'83 the Turbo was the undisputed Quarter-Mile/Top-Speed King

But the competition hasn't been sleeping, and a rematch is scheduled.

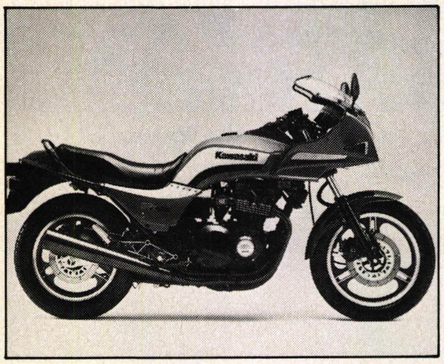


The GPz550 has the same red/silver color option as the bigger bikes in the series

And the same style half-fairing, instruments and three-spoke wheels, too.

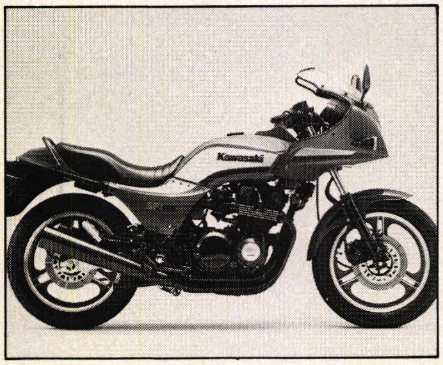
'84. Starting with its new half-fairing, the 550 now has the same look as the bigger bikes in the GPz lineup, and backs up those looks with a few more big-bike-inspired pieces like the new three-spoke wheels, an aluminum swingarm and an anti-dive fork. And just to be sure that GPz550 riders don't feel slighted, the bike's had some more power massaged into its 553cc four, as well.

- Two late '83 entries, Kawasaki's 750 Turbo and its 1300 Voyager, have had no changes at all from the early-release models. But none were called for, either; these bikes already are the proven extremes in their respective categories—the Turbo for quarter-mile acceleration coupled with flat-out top speed, and the Voyager for unmitigated size.
- But not everyone is interested in glazed eyeballs, either from blistering speed or from unending rides over the Interstates. Some people are more interested in weekend playbike fun or serious enduro competition. And this year's KDX200 fits right into that slot, better than it did before. For '84, a major complaint about the KDX200 has been fixed: The bike now has a bigger fuel tank, insuring that not only will you get deep into the woods with the 200, you won't have to push the bike back out for lack of fuel.
- For those who want a little more punch in their play/enduro riding, there's the KDX250. The quarter-liter version KDX has a few added attractions this year, too. A new, leading-axle air-adjustable fork and a wider-ratio six-speed transmission should make the KDX250 more competitive.



A choice of red or silver for the '84 GPz1100

And both colors sprayed in the U.S.A.



The '84-version GPz750 is a rerun of '83

Rerun through the paint shop.

Continued

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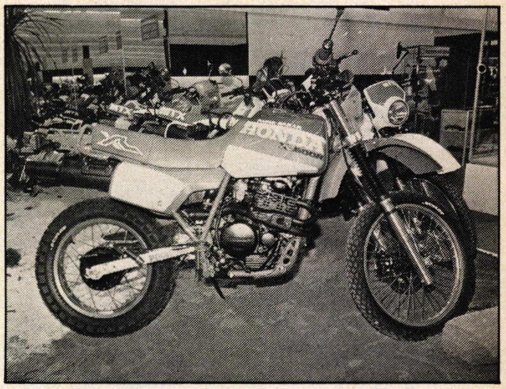
SHOW COVERAGE:

Paris '84

The fall collection under the lights.

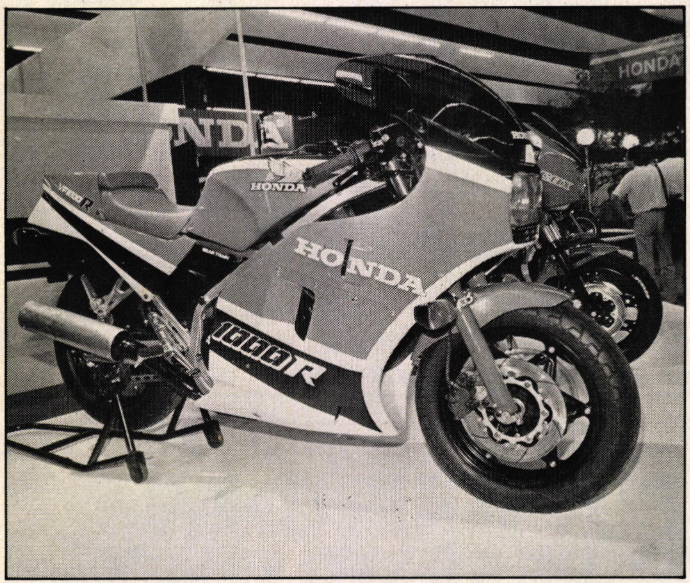
- Europe is the traditional site of the premier display of new motorcycles—the world's first look at new hardware for the upcoming year and the manufacturers' display of motorcycling concepts for the future. This Grand Show annually switches locations, alternating between Cologne, Germany, and Paris, and this was the year for the City Of Lights. Between October 1 and 9 the Porte de Versailles housed the 70th Salon de la Moto, with more than 70,000 moto-fans coming to see the absolute latest in the world of two wheels.

All week long the biggest crush was at the Yamaha exhibit—the RD500LC (and rumors of its possible release as early as this spring) was the cause. A steady flow of the curious perused Honda's display, as



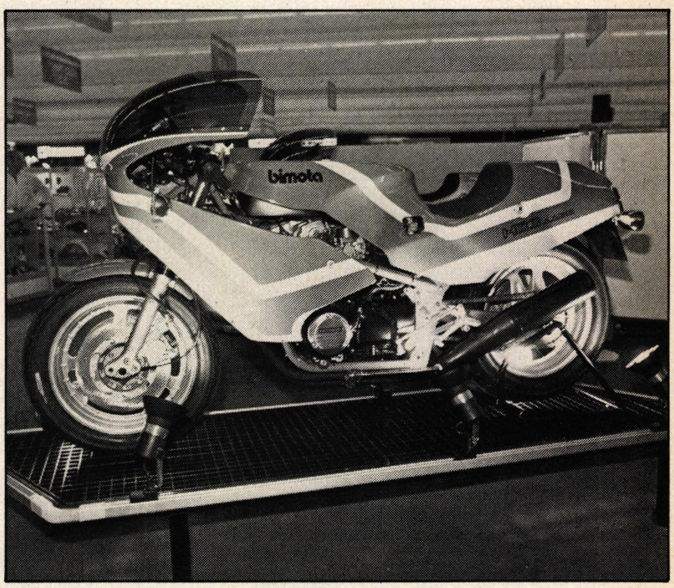
Honda is putting its hopes on the XL600R

A Paris debut for the Paris-Dakar bike.



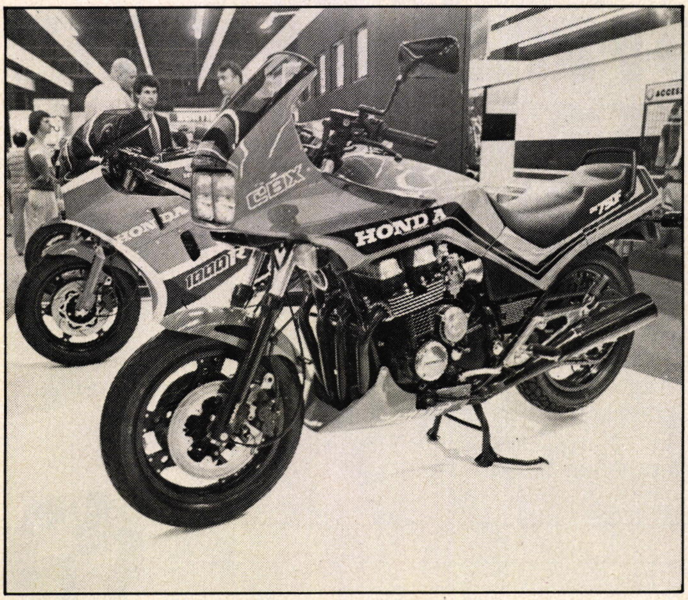
The likely successor to the CB1100R turned out in full show dress

Look for bodywork changes on the VF1000R before its release.



A European show isn't complete without the Bimotas

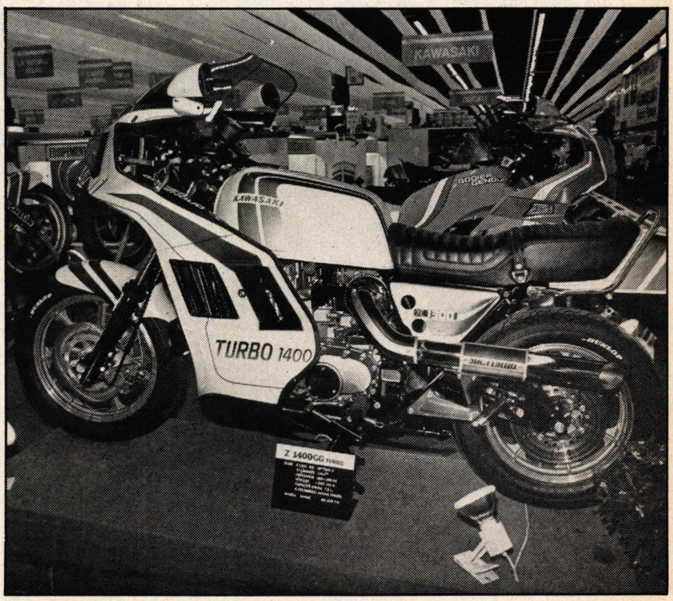
Showing off new graphics on this Honda-engined version.



PHOTOGRAPHY © 1984 PATRICK BEHAR

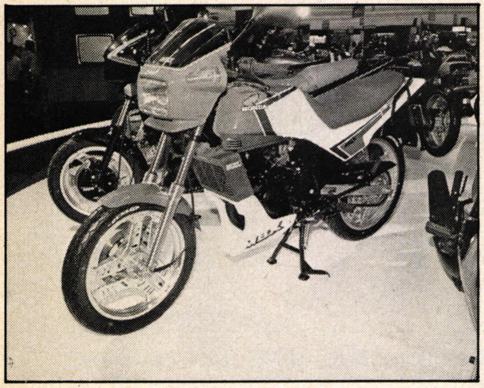
Inline-four technology still is alive and well at Honda

Don't expect the CBX750 here, though.



Paris brings one-offs out of the woodwork

Like this Turbo 1400 Kawasaki.

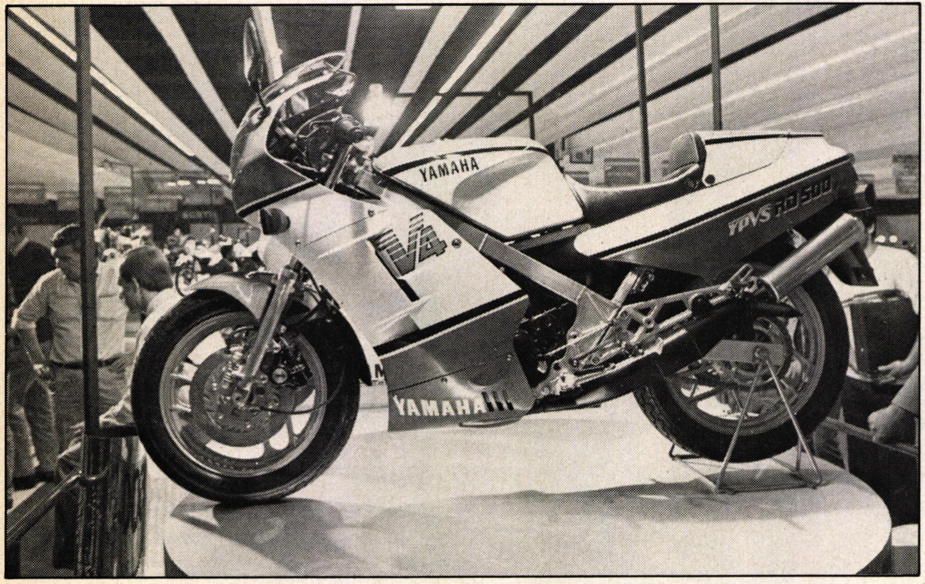


Europeans take their 125s seriously

Honda's MBX model was a sure hit.

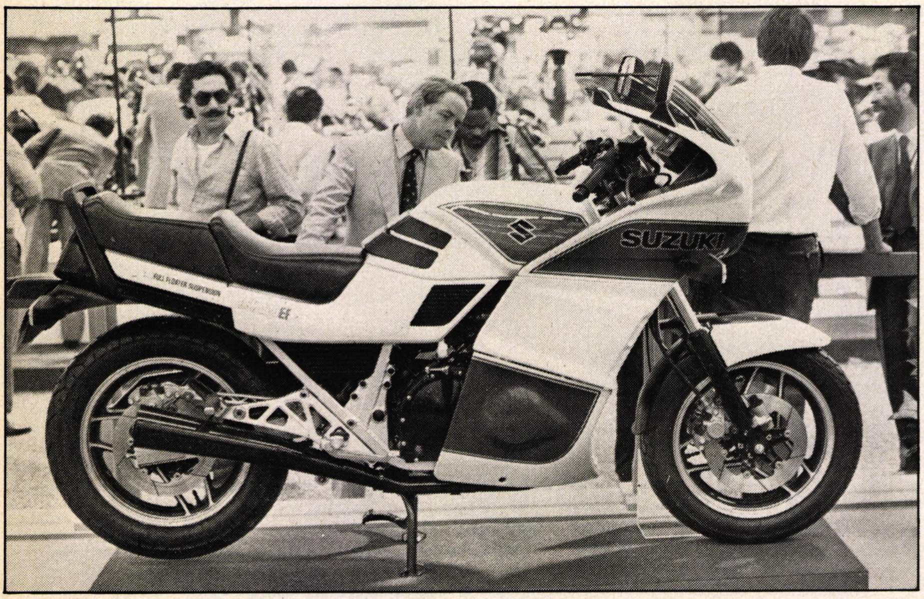
well. Honda's big attention-getter was the VF1000R, a liquid-cooled, vee-four-powered replacement for the CB1100R. Kawasaki and Suzuki, meanwhile, chose Paris to spotlight machines already scheduled for '84 release: Kawasaki's GPz900R and Suzuki's new GS1100ES.

Although BMW and Moto Guzzi were at the Paris Show, some of the European manufacturers, notably Cagiva, played a waiting game with their new model lines. Possibly in deference to the upcoming Italian show, scheduled for later in the year at Milan, the much-anticipated Cagiva/Ducatis were nowhere to be seen. This year, Paris and its Salon de la Moto belonged to the Japanese.



Here's the show-stopper at this year's Salon de la Moto: Yamaha's RD500

Directionals and mirrors are the only markings of a streetbike.



At center stage for Suzuki was the latest version of its 1100E

With a 16-inch front wheel, Full Floater suspension and a square-tube frame.

Continued

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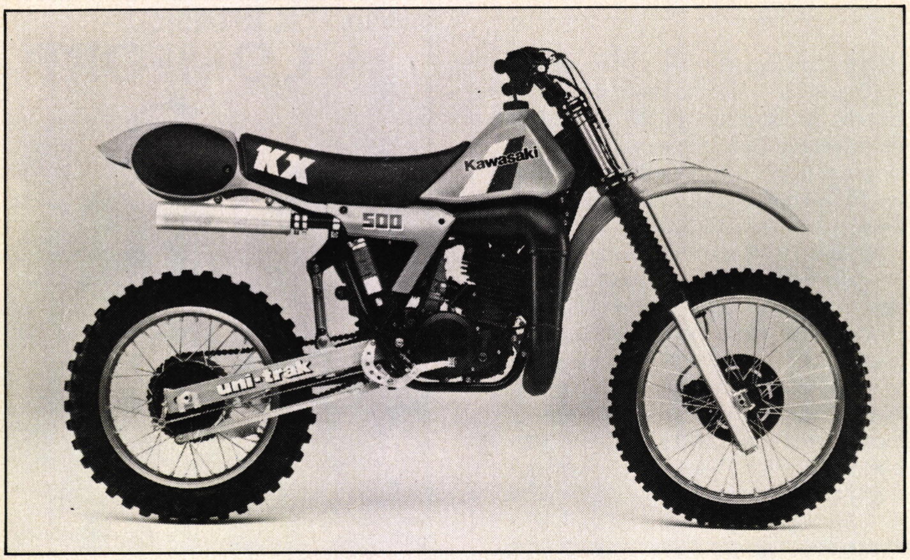
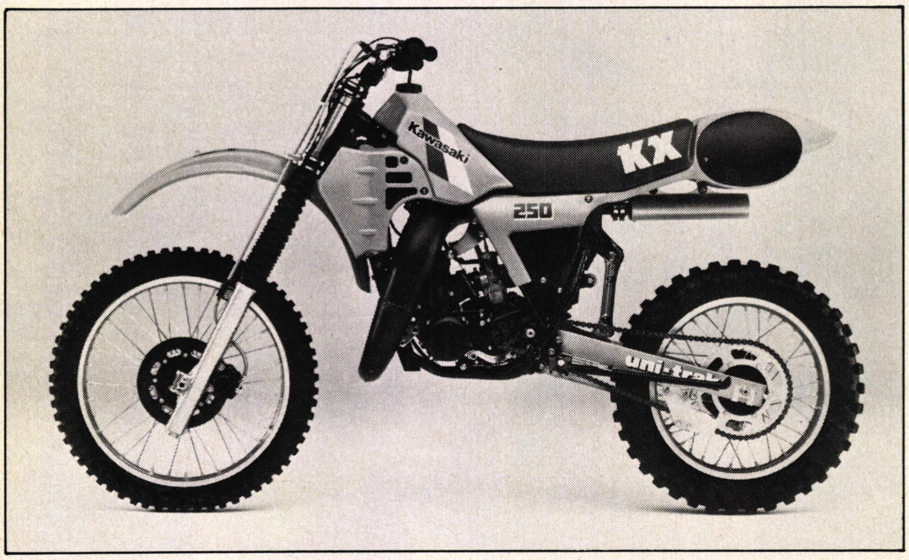


Kawasaki's plan is simple: Take all the Open-class wins possible

And use the revamped KX500 to get them.



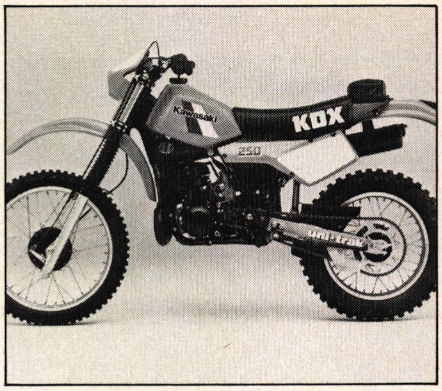
The KX250 had a color problem last year—victory circle was always full of Honda red

But top-to-bottom changes for the green bike could change things for '84.

KDX
Kawasaki
200
uni-trak

The question was how do you improve a bike that already is the best?

The answer: Give it a bigger fuel tank so the fun can last longer.



The changes in the KDX250 for '84 are small

But net some sizable improvements.

Kawasaki
250

The Tecate had a strong start for '84

It won its first race.

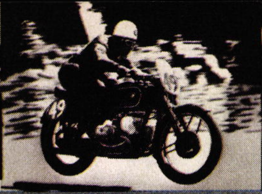
- Some like their competition a little more intense, though—as in no-holds-barred MX-intense. And with all its changes, this year's Kawasaki Open-classer might be just the ticket for that kind of warfare. Pick an area—engine, frame, suspension, riding position—and the '84 KX500 has been altered with just one object: to put green bikes in the winner's circle.
- And all that applies to the '84 KX250, too. This middleweight motocrosser, with its revised porting, redesigned exhaust and new carburetor, promises its riders a broader powerband to use in the hotly contested 250 class. Less overall weight, along with a revised Uni-Trak linkage, should make the bike easier to handle, too.
- But lately it hasn't been only the two-wheelers heating up the off-road scene. Racing three-wheelers, like the KXT250 Tecate, have roosted into the picture, too. And this liquid-cooled, two-stroke trike, introduced in late '83, wasted little time making its presence known: It won the first national-caliber race it ran. As you might imagine, Kawasaki left the Tecate alone, figuring first is not such a bad place to start the new season.

FEDERAL CASES

- The Citizens' Coalition for Rational Traffic Laws (CCRTL), a group formed to seek repeal

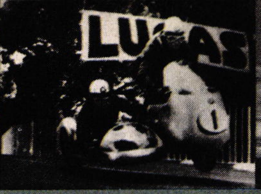
Continued

1923
The horizontally-opposed twin is the rage of the 1923 Paris Motor Show.

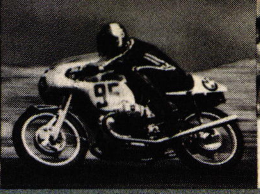


1939
Schorsch Meier rides a 54 HP flat twin to victory in Britain's Tourist Trophy Cup race.

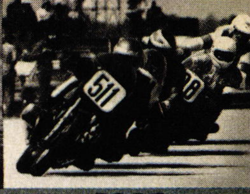
1954
Wilhelm Noll and Fritz Cron set 116 sidecar records between 1954-59.



1966
An airborne Fritz Scheidegger leads a BMW sweep of all five international classics.

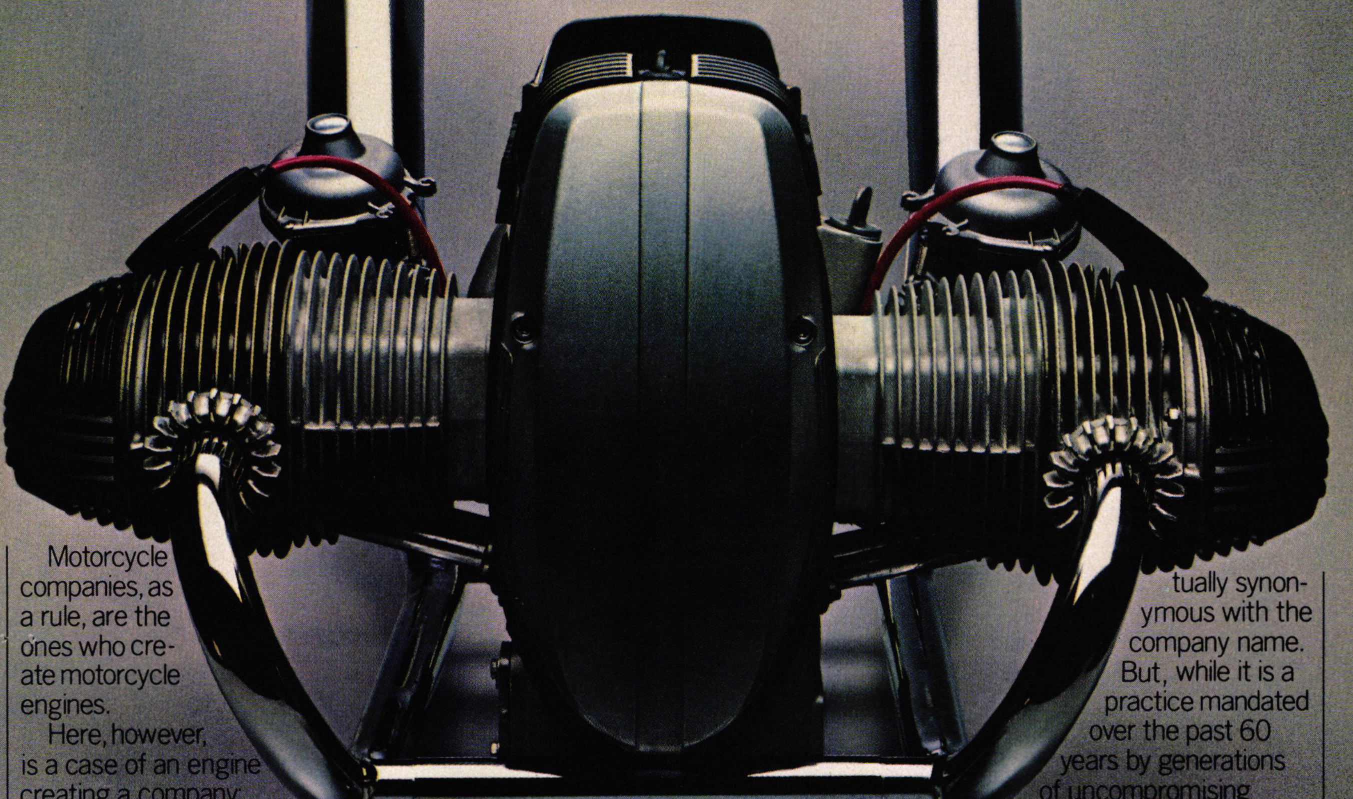


1976
BMW scores a spectacular double victory in Daytona's Superbike Races.



1983
Stuart Beatson pilots a BMW to victory in the Battle of the Twins series.

THE ENGINE THAT POWERED AN ENTIRE MOTORCYCLE COMPANY FROM 0 TO 60 YEARS.



Motorcycle companies, as a rule, are the ones who create motorcycle engines.

Here, however, is a case of an engine creating a company:

The horizontally opposed twin, the motorcycle engine that propelled the Bavarian Motor Works into 6 decades of motorcycle manufacture. And, since then, literally dictated how the entire company would run.

Unveiled at the 1923 Paris Motor Show, the opposed twin had a limited number of moving parts which provided it with an innate ability to keep on moving. Mile after mile. Year after year. And since then some 195 speed and endurance records attest to its unflagging reliability.

That sort of longevity places an additional demand on a motorcycle company: The rest of the machine must be made equally durable. Inspiring, indeed, requiring BMW to shun all the high-speed assembly-line techniques in favor of extremely limited production.

Today BMW carefully builds just one motorcycle to, say, every 86 whisked out by Honda. "Limited production" is now a phrase virtually synonymous with the company name.

But, while it is a practice mandated over the past 60 years by generations of uncompromising BMW engineers, the true policymaker of BMW still is not a person at all.

It is an engine.

THE LEGENDARY MOTORCYCLES OF GERMANY.

BMW

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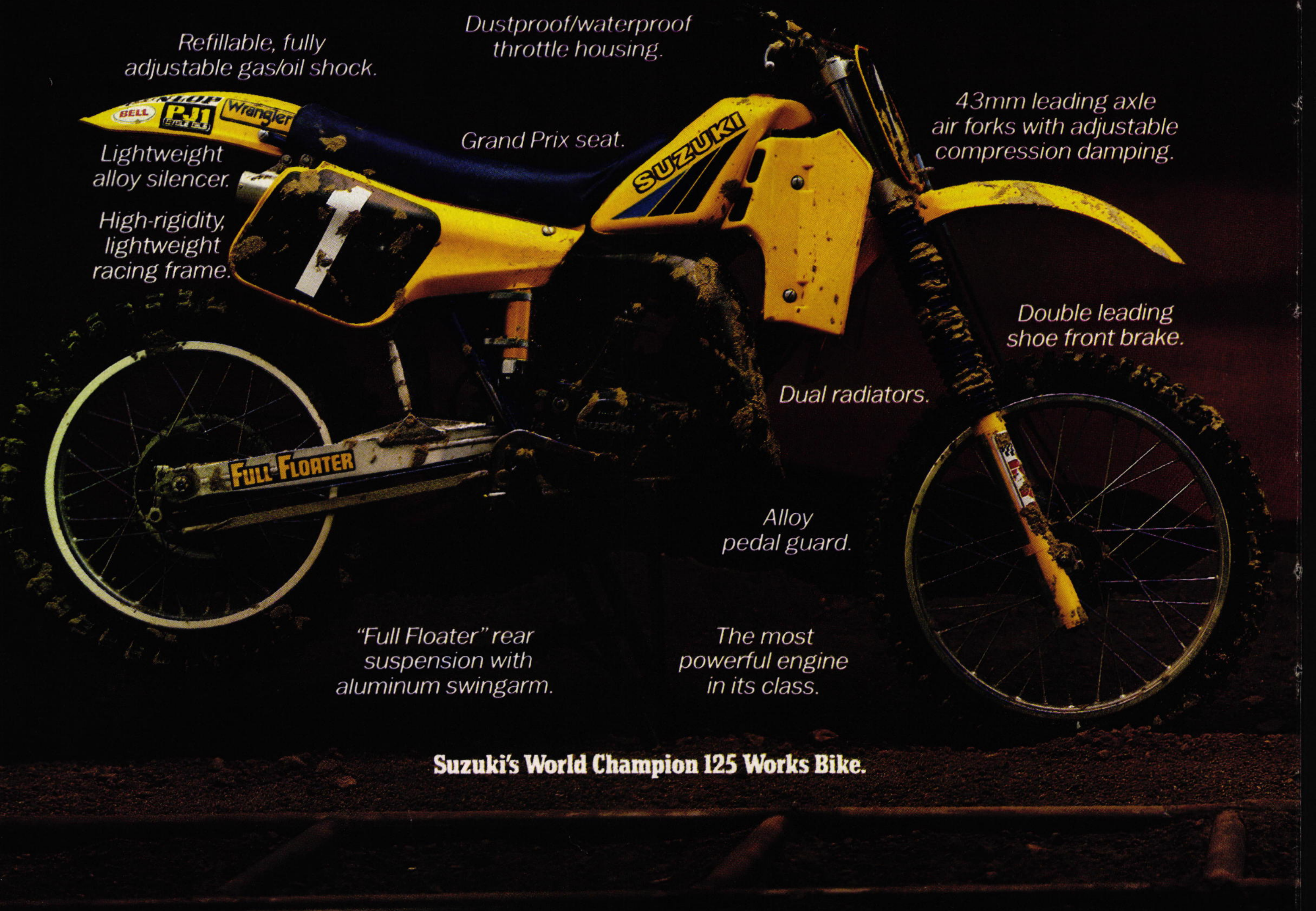
The Works.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Grand Prix seat.
Lightweight alloy silencer.
High-rigidity, lightweight racing frame.
Double leading shoe front brake.
Dual radiators.
Alloy pedal guard.
"Full Floater" rear suspension with aluminum swingarm.
The most powerful engine in its class.
SUZUKI
FULL FLOATER
Wrangler
BELL
PJ1
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Suzuki's World Champion 125 Works Bike.

To know what to expect from the new generation RMs, just take a close look at Mark Barnett's class-leading Works bike. And while you're looking, keep in mind that this is exactly the kind of machine that helped Suzuki win *every* 125cc World Championship ever awarded.

Now. Notice all the trick parts? Ditto for the production RMs.

The awesome horsepower? Ditto.

The razor-sharp handling? Ditto.

Ditto. Ditto. Ditto. Fact is, both the new RM-125 and the RM-250 are about as close to Suzuki's all-out, no-holds-barred factory machines as you can get…really.

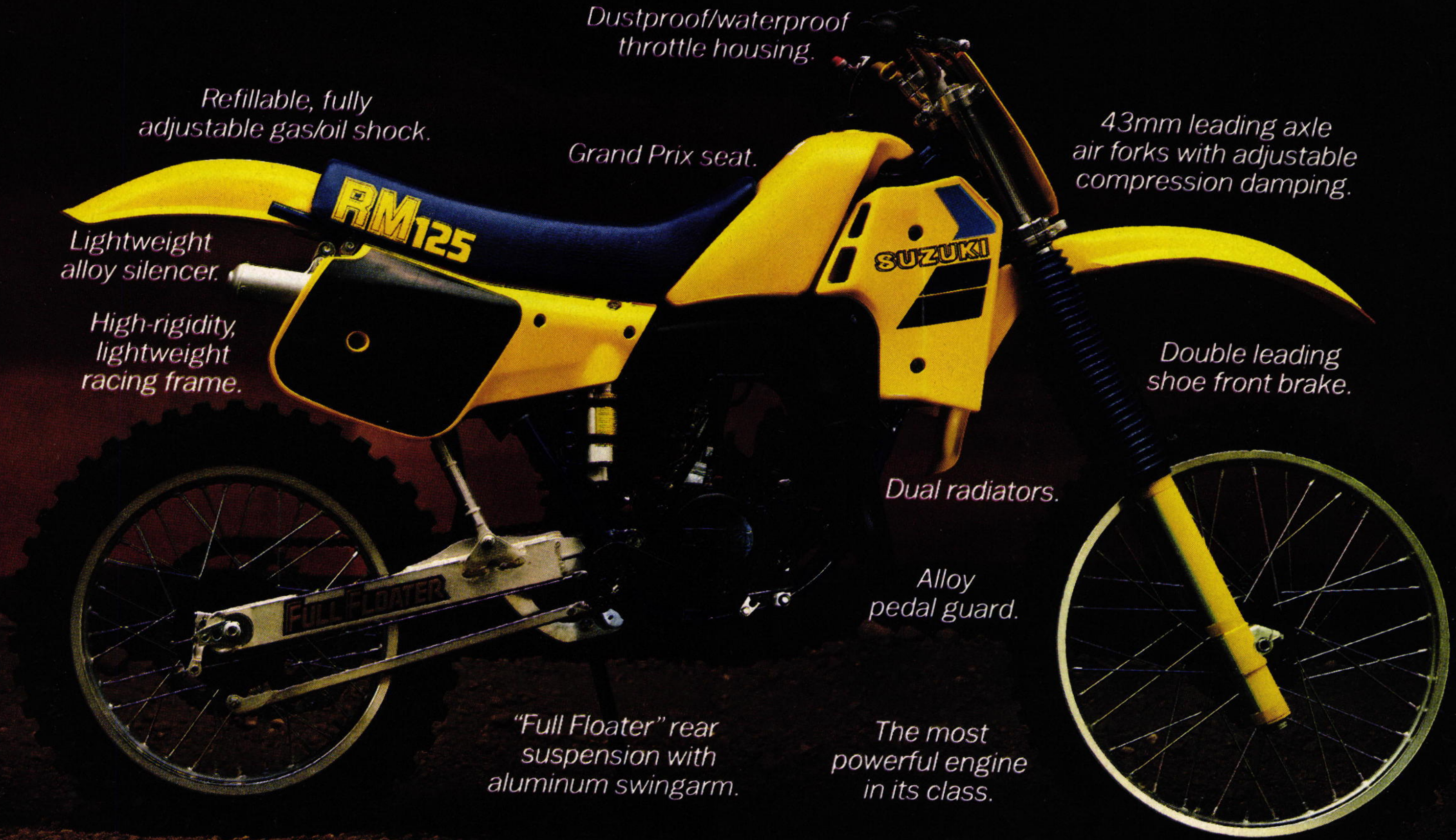
And while we *did* save some of the ultra-exotic alloys for our world champion factory bikes, you'd be surprised how many parts are the same (in some cases, right down to the very part numbers).

Even more important is how much better qualified they are at winning than anything else on the track.

The 125's water-cooled engine, for example, is now totally new from the cases up. There's virtually no point in the rev range that didn't get a sizeable boost in horsepower. And that's to say nothing of the new Power Reed system, the new flat slide carb or the all-new GP frame. Even the legendary "Full Floater" rear suspension and stout 43mm front forks have been completely reworked to give you a stronger edge over any other MXer you can name.

And if you think we've in any way neglected the new RM-250, think again. Because virtually

Ditto.



Dustproof/waterproof throttle housing.

Refillable, fully adjustable gas/oil shock.

Grand Prix seat.

43mm leading axle air forks with adjustable compression damping.

Lightweight alloy silencer.

High-rigidity, lightweight racing frame.

Double leading shoe front brake.

Dual radiators.

Alloy pedal guard.

"Full Floater" rear suspension with aluminum swingarm.

The most powerful engine in its class.

Actual 1984 RM-125 Production Bike.

every part on this quarter-liter machine is new. And improved. Like the 125, horsepower has been upped throughout the power band. The GP-style frame is completely new for even greater rigidity and lighter weight. The Works seat blends smoothly into the redesigned fuel tank. And the front suspension and race-ready "Full Floater" rear suspension have been refined, offering total adjustability and control. In short, everything that could ever get you closer to the finish line has been improved, then improved again.

RM125
RM250
FULL FLOATER

The new generation RMs. As you can see, the transformation they've undergone is nothing short of sensational.

And the performance?

Ditto.

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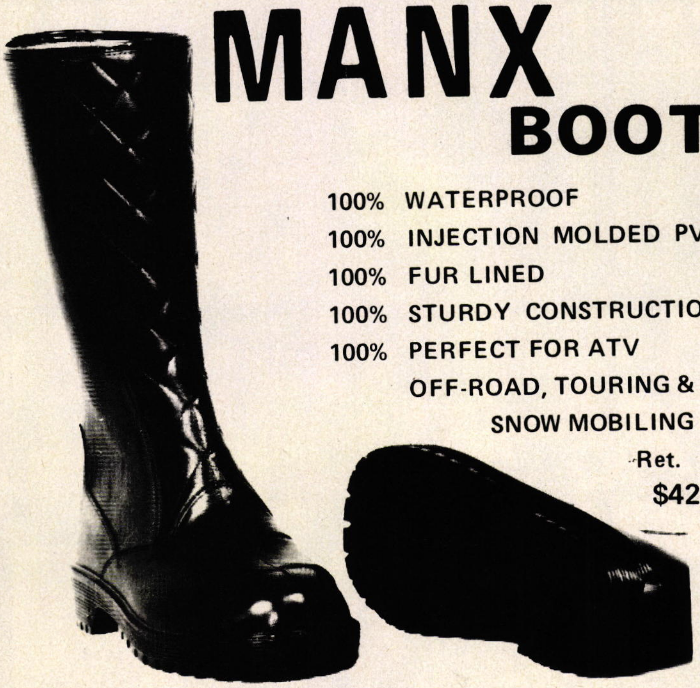

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of the nationally mandated 55-mph speed limit, recently came into the news. The group petitioned the National Academy of Sciences to have Jim Baxter, CCRTL's president, appointed to an Academy-sponsored study committee investigating the benefits of the 55-mph speed limit. The petition was denied, but the Academy did agree to let Baxter address the committee—provided a pro-55 advocate also addressed the committee. That person was none other than Joan Claybrook, former administrator of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. Baxter was first to testify, and cited a point-by-point rebuttal to the commonly believed arguments in favor of the double nickel. Then it was Claybrook's turn. In her prepared presentation, the former administrator gave no new information, and chose to stick with the often-used, never-proved argument about the number of lives and amount of fuel saved by the 55-mph limit. After her speech, however, Claybrook stayed before the committee to elaborate on some of her personal opinions concerning highway safety. These were, to say the least, interesting. Some of Claybrook's thoughts included:

1/ Motorcycles should not be allowed on any Interstate highway.
2/ All motor vehicles should be fitted with mandatory speed-governors.
3/ One justification for the lower speed limit is that it allows drunks to better control their vehicles.
4/ The 85-mph speedometer was a significant safety device, and its demise came about mainly due to efforts of the motorcycle industry.
5/ One national speed limit, preferably 50 mph, is desirable because people wouldn't be confused by trying to adjust to different speeds.

After reading that you might want to contact the Citizens' Coalition for Rational Traffic Laws. It can be reached at 6678 Pertzborn Road, Dane, Wisconsin 53529.

• The CCRTL isn't the only organization battling the federal bureaucracy for riders' rights, however: The American Motorcyclist Association has been in this fight for years. Recently, through its Government Relations staff, the AMA announced the availability of a variety of publications aimed at helping riders participate more effectively in the legislative process. By contacting the AMA, riders can request pamphlets such as "How To Communicate With Government" or "The Rider's Guide To Political Action Committees." The publications are designed to get motorcyclists involved in the creation or amendment of laws that directly affect their sport. The AMA can be reached by writing to its main office at P.O. Box 141, Westerville, Ohio 43081, or by calling (614) 891-2425.

• A motorcycle is the subject for the 12th issue of the Postal Service's Transportation Series stamps, a program started in 1981. The bike depicted on the new five-cent stamp is a 1913 Pope Model L, a machine made by the Pope Manufacturing Company of Westfield, Massachusetts from 1911 through 1918. The actual motorcycle used as a model for the stamp came from the Smithsonian Institution's collection. The Pope Model L had been donated to the Institute by John Beattie, of New Haven, Connecticut. Beattie, the original owner of the bike, purchased the machine for $250 in 1913.

- The future of the Snell Foundation is uncertain. Its founder, Dr. George Snively, died recently, and the three surviving members of the Foundation's Board of Directors have yet to decide how to conduct future helmet certification. Currently, no helmet testing is being conducted by the Foundation.
- Wyoming motorcyclists over the age of 19 are no longer required to wear helmets while riding. That state's governor recently signed into law a bill revising Wyoming's former mandatory helmet-use statute.

HARD CASH

- The bankrupt Triumph motorcycle company has been the cause of much activity lately. First, Harley-Davidson expressed an interest in acquiring the defunct manufacturer. Now, representatives from two other motorcycle companies, Cagiva of Italy and Enfield India of Madras, India, have visited the West Midlands to have a look at what remains of Triumph. Claudio Castiglione, Cagiva's president, has said his company is "particularly interested" in keeping Triumph production in Great Britain, where Cagiva already has a subsidiary company set up to import its machines. Castiglione also said Cagiva would want to secure the "long-term future of the Triumph name," and its twin-cylinder engine-building experience. He hasn't, however, affixed a dollar value to that desire for the Triumph name.

But Enfield India has. That Indian manufacturer, which bought the rights, plant and tooling for the Enfield Bullet 350cc single in 1959—and, with a few modifications, has been producing the machine ever since—put in a bid of almost $1 million for the same type of deal from Triumph. If Enfield India's bid is successful, Triumph production would be transferred out of England. Apparently, Enfield India believes its offer will be accepted; the company already has drawn up plans to warehouse the Triumph assets prior to their shipment to India.

- Maico is back in business. As reported earlier, the three Maisch brothers (Wilhelm Jr., Hans and Peter) had split with the company's co-founder, Otto Maisch, and were attempting to raise the capital necessary to resume production. That attempt was successful. The three brothers raised almost $1 million, enough to convince the liquidator to lease back the plant near Stuttgart, West Germany. The new company formed by the Maisch brothers plans to produce approximately 2,000 MX machines per year. Some of the old company's assets, however, still are being offered for sale in an effort to pay back creditors who are owed, collectively, more than $2 million. A lawsuit brought by the Union of Industrial Metalworkers, charging that Maico's collapse was intentional, won't affect the new company, though: Otto Maisch is named as the sole respondent in that court case, which has yet to come before a judge.
- Hondas rolling off that company's Marysville, Ohio assembly line soon will have U.S.-made engines. Honda has announced plans to expand its Ohio motorcycle manufacturing facility to include engine production, starting in early 1985. Reportedly, the company has spent $30 million for its new engine-building operation, which includes the casting, machining and final assembly of large-displacement multi-cylinder powerplants. Engine-production capability is pegged at 250 units per day, or approximately 60,000 a year. This latest addition to the Marysville plant puts Honda's U.S. manufacturing investment at more than $340 million.
- Not surprisingly, Kawasaki also is increasing production at its U.S. assembly plant, located in Lincoln, Nebraska. In addition to the company's KLT three-wheelers, KXT Tecate racing three-wheelers, and Jet Skis—which already are assembled in Nebraska—Kawasaki will build the GPz900R, GPz1100, GPz750, 750 Turbo, Voyager and the 1100 LTD at the Lincoln plant. Because of this shift in production sites, Kawasaki reckons it can hold price increases on its big-bore models to approximately 10 percent for 1984.

Continued

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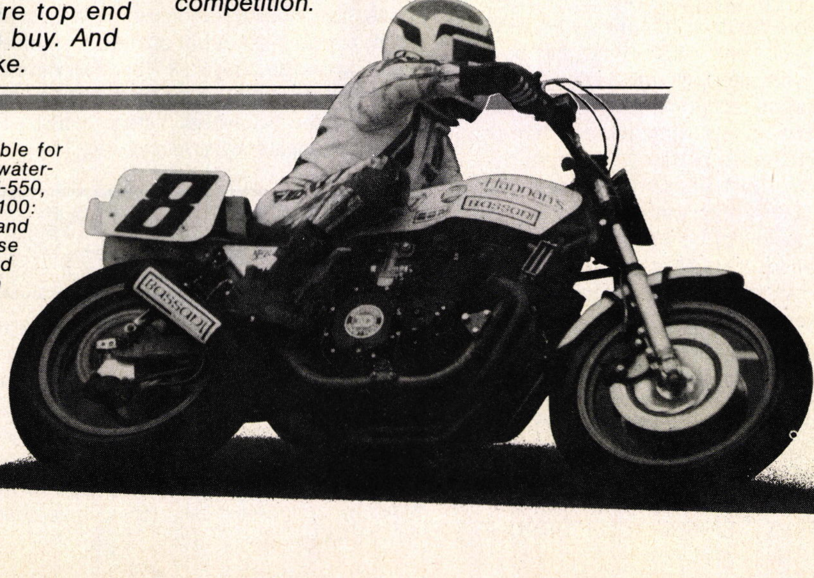

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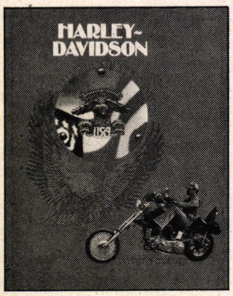


Harley-Davidson, The Milwaukee Marvel
by Harry V. Sucher
283 pages, $22.95
Haynes Publications Inc.
861 Lawrence Drive
Newbury Park, California 91320

- Mention the Big Four and, immediately, most motorcyclists know exactly what you're talking about: the industry-dominating Japanese manufacturers. But there once was a Big Three: Indian, Excelsior and Harley-Davidson. And it's fair to state that the very existence of today's Big Four is due, at least in part, to one of those original Big Three.

In a little-known business deal of the Twenties, Harley-Davidson sold the manufacturing rights, blueprints, materials lists, heat-treating techniques and everything else necessary to manufacture motorcycles, including the machine tools, to the Sankyo Company of Japan. Sankyo's Shinagawa plant was the first complete motorcycle manufacturing facility in Japan, and produced a near-exact copy of the side-valve Harley called the Rikuo, which translates as "King Of The Road."

Sucher's history of Harley-Davidson, starting with the company's founding in 1903 and continuing through its 1981 buy-back negotiations with AMF, is filled with just this kind of information, along with hundreds of photos and illustrations. Sucher's research was exhaustive, and his interviews with those actually involved, such as A.R. Child, the H-D executive responsible for that Japanese licensing agreement, lend credibility to his book. Sucher has sifted through H-D's self-serving literature, added his own findings, and has come up with what is likely the most complete history of Harley-Davidson.

Don't expect a light and breezy read here; Sucher has written a history text and, if anything, he's included too much information. Items like the reason for a poor finish in an obscure race during the mid-Twenties (a stretched chain) could just as well have been left out.

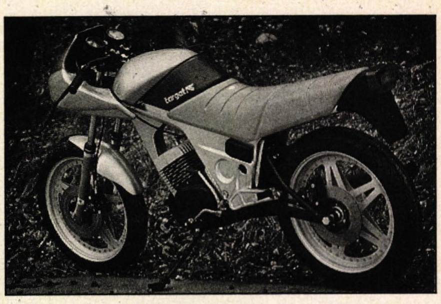
However, for the serious student of Harley-Davidson and the history of motorcycling in America, "Harley-Davidson, The Milwaukee Marvel" should be near the top of the must-read list. *—Joe Kress*

RUMORS

- Yamaha's RZ350LC (Coming Soon, December '83) could be just the tip of that company's repliracer iceberg. While the 350cc two-stroke, with its Power Valve-equipped engine and KR-autographed bodywork, has been made 49-state legal with catalytic convertors, hints from the underground show that riders outside the U.S. have a bit more in store for them. How does an RD*500*LC sound? Word has it that this streetable half-liter two-stroke is a dead ring-dinger for a factory GP roadracer, starting with a square-four, twin-crankshaft engine and a full fairing. So what's your bet that Yamaha will find some place to stuff a convertor or two into *this* street rocket and keep the EPA happy?
- Have you seen any three-piece-suit business-types eyeing vacant industrial property lately? If you have, our boys on the business beat say there's a good chance that what you saw were advance scouts for Suzuki and Yamaha, *actively* searching for possible locations for U.S.-based manufacturing plants. Honda, with its Marysville, Ohio factory, and Kawasaki, with its Lincoln, Nebraska facility, are effectively shielded from the big-bore import tariff, while Suzuki and Yamaha are still out in the cold. Look for that to change quickly, though. We've heard that Suzuki already has met with Kawasaki Motors, U.S.A., *and* the Toro Corporation, in attempts to buy space in either of those companies' factories in order to build 700cc-plus bikes. Inside sources say both negotiating sessions were unsuccessful for Suzuki. Boardroom scuttlebutt is that Suzuki, like Yamaha, will bite the bullet and build a U.S. factory—soon.
- And if what we've heard from our European underground pans out, Slater Brothers Ltd. might be in the market for a little more working room, too. Slater Brothers, we're told, along with Laverda General Import of West Germany, is planning to build super-high-performance versions of the newest Laverda RGA 1000. No sooner will those Italian-made triples come into England, hint our men over there, than the 1000cc machines will be bored out to 1200cc, fitted with new camshafts, higher-compression pistons and larger carbs, and decked out in all-new, British-designed sportbike bodywork. The glory days of the British motorcycle industry might be long gone, but the two-wheel cottage industry in England is apparently alive and well.

APART FROM THE CROWD

- Where is it written that learner bikes have to be mundane? In Great Britain, where beginning motorcyclists are limited to 125cc machines, Jan Fellstrom of Target Design (best known for its input to the original Suzuki Katana project) has just come up with an alternative to run-of-the-mill 125s. And Fellstrom's "learner" bike looks more than just a little like that original Katana. The full-on eighth-liter sports machine features goodies such as a monocoque chassis, Marzocchi fork, Astralite wheels and a single-shock rear suspension. Powering this 200-pound trainer is an oil-injected single-cylinder Rotax two-stroke. While Fellstrom's 125 certainly meets the letter of the English law, we suspect it deviates just a bit from the spirit. This learner bike from Target Design seems to be more suited for schooling English beginners in the techniques needed to take over where English roadracing hero Barry Sheene left off.



The course is Sportbike Riding 101A

And this 125 is the teaching aid.

- Sheene, incidentally, has just published his autobiography, "Leader Of The Pack," co-written with British journalist Ian Beacham. In the book, Sheene apparently shows little love for anyone, or anything, in motorcycle racing—except himself, of course. The FIM, the ACU and organizers at just about every racecourse in the world come under Sheene's attack, as do most of his contemporary rivals. Of Kenny Roberts, Sheene writes, ". . . Kenny would have difficulty developing a cold, let alone a motor bike. He's a hopeless test rider; his bikes start out by not handling and end up still not handling." Nice. Sheene might consider steroids and martial-arts training during the off-season to get himself ready for some interesting conversations undoubtedly in store for him around the pits and paddocks of next year's GP circuit.

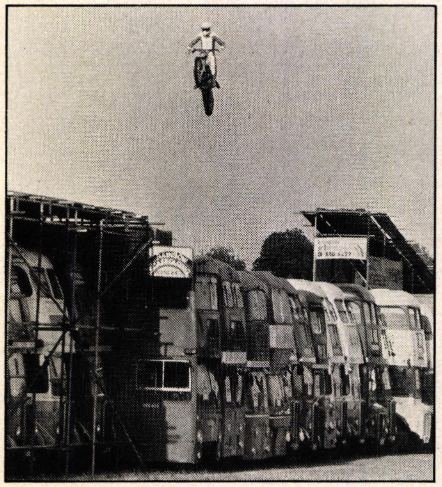
Malcolm Forbes has a real problem

Where he's going to keep his new bike.

- Harley-Davidson is proud of its new V^2 Evolution-engined motorcycles. So proud, in fact, that the first one off of the assembly line was put in the company's permanent museum collection. And the second machine off of the line, an FXRT Sport Glide, went into a permanent collection of sorts, too. You guessed it: Malcolm Forbes has another Harley. Forbes' FXRT, with its special gas-tank plaque and "Forbes: Capitalist Tool" fairing logo, was presented to the publisher ". . . in recognition of his outstanding contributions to enhance the sport and image of motorcycling." Now he just has to find room to squeeze it into his garage, which already holds 68 other bikes.

• Forbes' brand of capitalist initiative, and a Honda 200X ATC, have transformed one of Southern California's best known—and least accessible—surfing spots. The surf break known as Trestles, south of San Clemente, California, is surrounded by the Camp Pendleton Marine base. Because the area is being developed as a state park, the days of patrolling Marines evicting beachgoers are long gone, but the 1½-mile walk into the beach still is very much in place. Enter Terry MacLean and his Honda ATC. MacLean wrangled permission from the state of California to start a tram service into Trestles, using a home-built cart pulled by his 200X. He can carry 12 surfers and their boards, and charges $1 per round trip. Business has been good, too: MacLean shuttles in 300 riders daily, that number steadily increasing as more people learn of his service. Malcolm would approve.

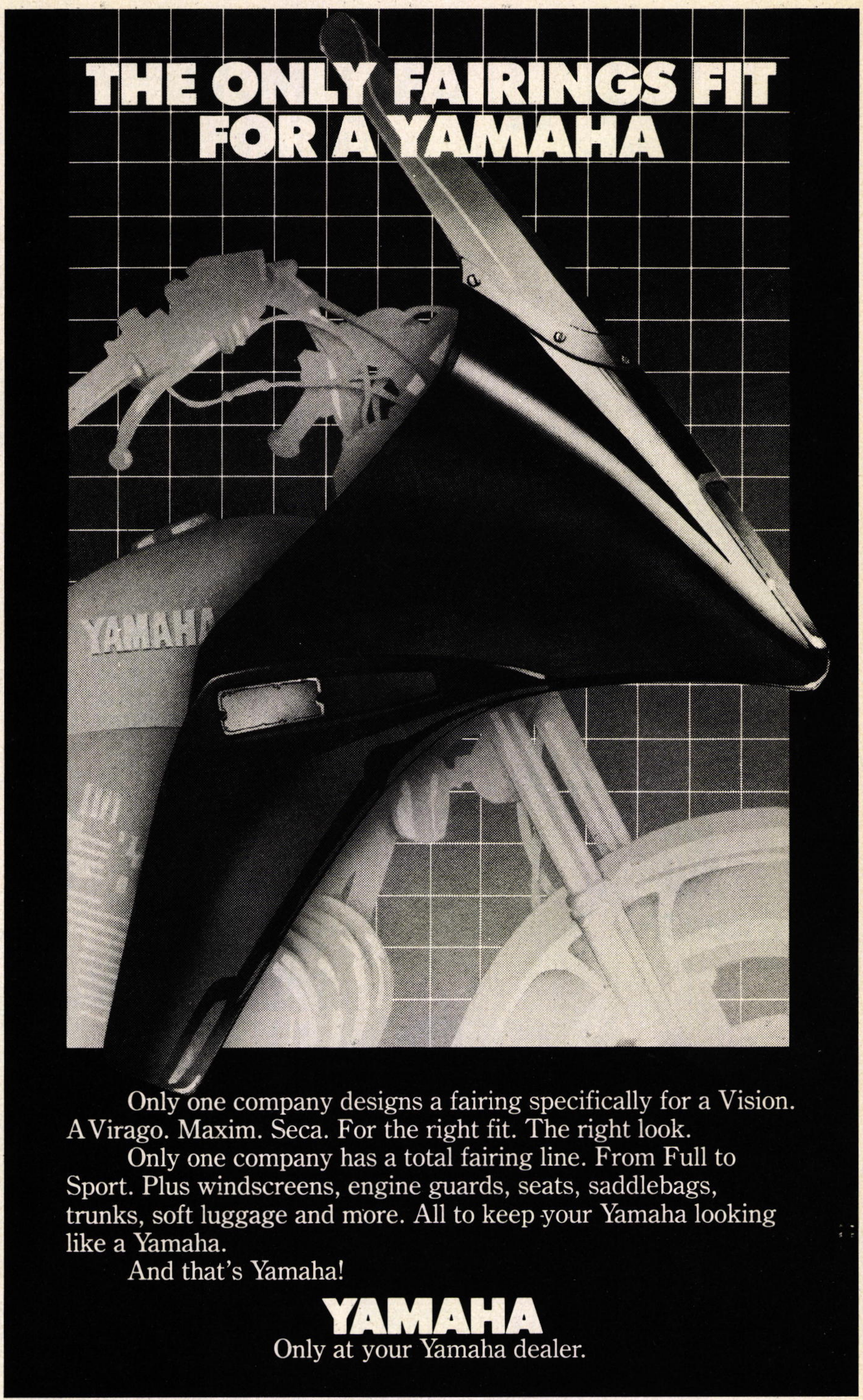
• "On Any Sunday II" is making the theater rounds again, but this time the screen is in your living room. Merlin Mail, a Los Angeles distributor (8033 Sunset Blvd., Suite 7777 B, Los Angeles, California 90046) now has "OAS II" available both in VHS and Beta video-cassette formats. Just $47.95, plus $3 shipping, will bring Bob Hannah, Bruce Penhall and Kenny Roberts jumping, sliding and hanging-off into your home.



Double-jumping with an English twist

And a world record for a KTM.

• And you thought you'd seen the ultimate motocross double-jump. Well think again, because Welshman Chris Bromham just put new meaning into that term, using his 495cc KTM Open-classer to vault 18 London buses—double-deckers, of course. Bromham is claiming the world record for his 208-foot jump, a distance he reached on the second try. The stuntman's first attempt was good for only 190 feet, sending him back to the starting ramp for another go. And that second jump had some unscheduled added thrills: Midway across the buses, a gust of wind blew Bromham off course, causing him to land on the ramp less than two feet from its edge. Double-jumping will never be the same. ●



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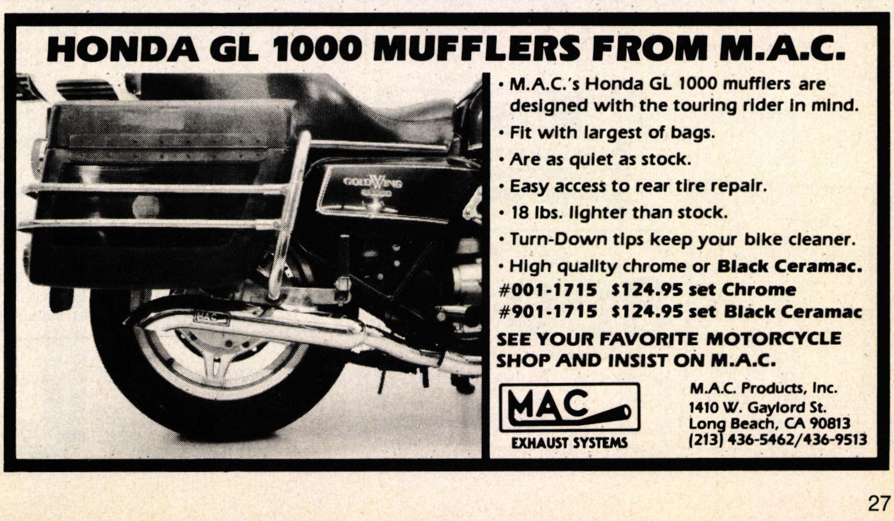

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HONDA 1984

RIDING IMPRESSIONS:

Six All-New Hondas

Honda's formula for streetbike success in 1984: Keep the familiar names, but add more displacement choices.

- **GL1200A Aspencade**
- **VF500F Interceptor**
- **VF1000F Interceptor**
- **Nighthawk S**
- **V30 Magna**
- **V65 Sabre**

Last year, Honda's collection of new streetbikes was so innovative, so trend-setting, so flat *overwhelming* that it inevitably prompted one question: What does Honda do for an encore in 1984? How does any company, including Honda itself, follow such brilliantly conceived models as the revolutionary V45 Interceptor, the ingenious Nighthawk 650, the supersonic V65 Magna or the controversial Shadow vee-twins?

The answer is: mostly with more Interceptors, Nighthawks and Magnas. Indeed, rather than trying to one-up itself by initiating more all-new model concepts, Honda has concentrated on expanding its most successful existing configurations into other displacement ranges. But since economic necessity has forced Honda to offer *fewer* street models for '84 (17, as opposed to 29 last year), some of the old standbys obviously had to move on to that big showroom in the sky. They probably won't be missed, though, for Honda's brand-new models are such stellar performers that it's hard to imagine anyone lamenting the passing of the old ones.

We make that statement with some authority, for we had the opportunity to ride most of those all-new machines during Honda's new-model press introduction at Willow Springs Raceway. That site was chosen, incidentally, not because the bikes in question are roadracers (although some are close) but because of the need for extreme privacy, since at that point Honda had not yet announced the '84 lineup to its dealer network.

As brief and confining as that track session was, however, it armed us with enough information to put together a series of riding impressions covering five of the six entirely new Hondas—plus a *non*-riding impression of the sixth model, which was present at Willow but not in a ridable state. Riding or non-riding, though, these impressions are not tests by any stretch of the imagination. For one thing, the bikes at Willow were preproduction prototypes that could differ slightly from the ones you'll be able to buy. And for another, we couldn't spend enough time on and around the bikes to legitimately call our reports "tests."

Nonetheless, once you read the brief impressions that follow, we think you'll find that despite the absence of out-and-out innovation in Honda's 1984 streetbike lineup, there promises to be every bit as much pure excitement as there was in last year's line.

In fact, maybe even *more*.

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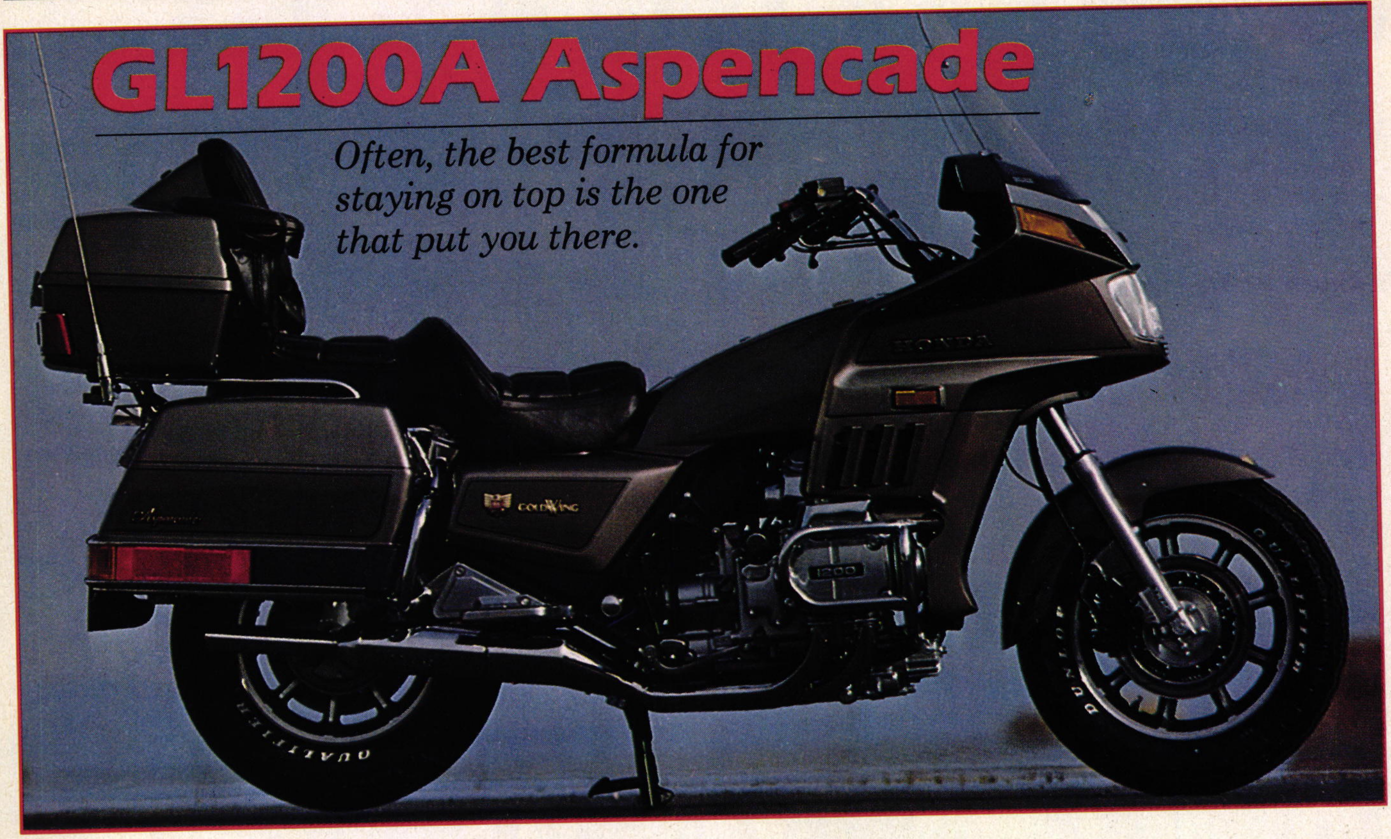
Continued

GL1200A Aspencade

Often, the best formula for staying on top is the one that put you there.



HONDA
Aspencade

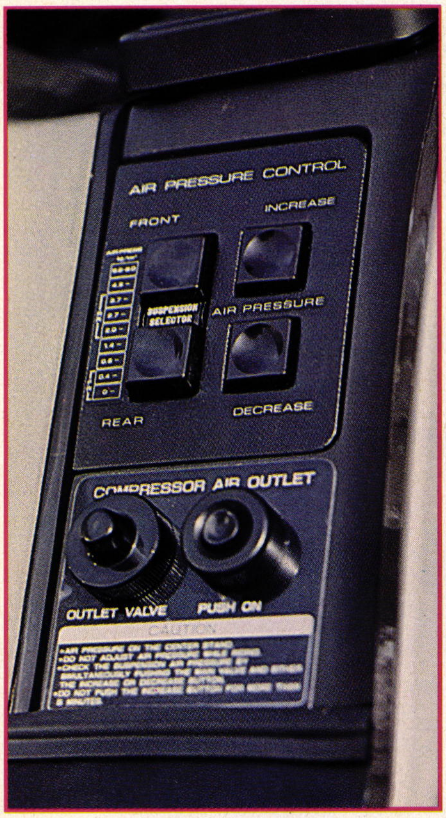
• There's bad news for all of you Gold Wing fans out there in the land of full-dress touring: Honda's Aspencade, the world's most popular turn-key touring rig, is entirely different for 1984, having been rethought and redesigned from stem to stern. But there's also good news, which is that even though little more than the valve-stem caps from the '83 model will fit the '84, the new Aspencade is essentially the same as the old one.

Confused? Don't be. It's just that since Yamaha and Kawasaki have entered the turn-key touring sweepstakes with some mighty impressive machines of their own, Honda has had to meet the challenge by seriously upgrading the Aspencade. But right from the outset, Honda's goal was to retain the basic characteristics that have endeared the big GLs to so many for so long. And that involved redoing just about every part on the motorcycle.

For instance, the engine still is a liquid-cooled, horizontally opposed-four with single overhead cams and two valves per cylinder; but a small increase in bore (from 75mm to 75.5mm) and a sizable increase in stroke (from 61.4mm to 66mm) have boosted the displacement from 1085cc to 1181.9cc; and most of the internal components have been strengthened to cope with the added power. Other significant engine refinements include hydraulic valve-lash adjusters, 32mm diaphragm-type CV carbs in place of the old 30mm piston-type, and an electronically controlled two-stage vacuum-advance on the solid-state ignition.

Unfortunately, we're unable to substantiate Honda's claims that these changes yield engine performance comparable to that of Yamaha's Venture Royale (the bike that looms as the biggest threat to the GL's dominance of turn-key touring), since the Aspencade was the one bike at Willow Springs that couldn't be ridden. Neither, then, can we verify that modifications to the twin-shock chassis have given the new Aspencade the kinds of curvy-road handling capabilities that have lured a number of former Gold Wing owners over into the Yamaha camp. But that claim seems reasonable, since the 1200cc engine sits higher in the frame to increase cornering clearance, while a 16-inch front wheel and a *15*-inch rear bring the seat height and the center of gravity back down almost to where they were on previous Gold Wing models.

So, too, are there similarities between the new Aspencade's integrated-look styling and that of the Venture Royale. The Honda's fairing has been completely restyled and blends into the dummy fuel tank, which once again has a useful storage compartment under its top lid now that the on-board air compressor has been moved from that area into the fairing. The saddlebags are larger, faired into the rear fender, and they're surrounded by an integrated bumper/light-bar. The


AIR PRESSURE CONTROL
FRONT
INCREASE
SUSPENSION SELECTOR
AIR PRESSURE
REAR
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PUSH ON
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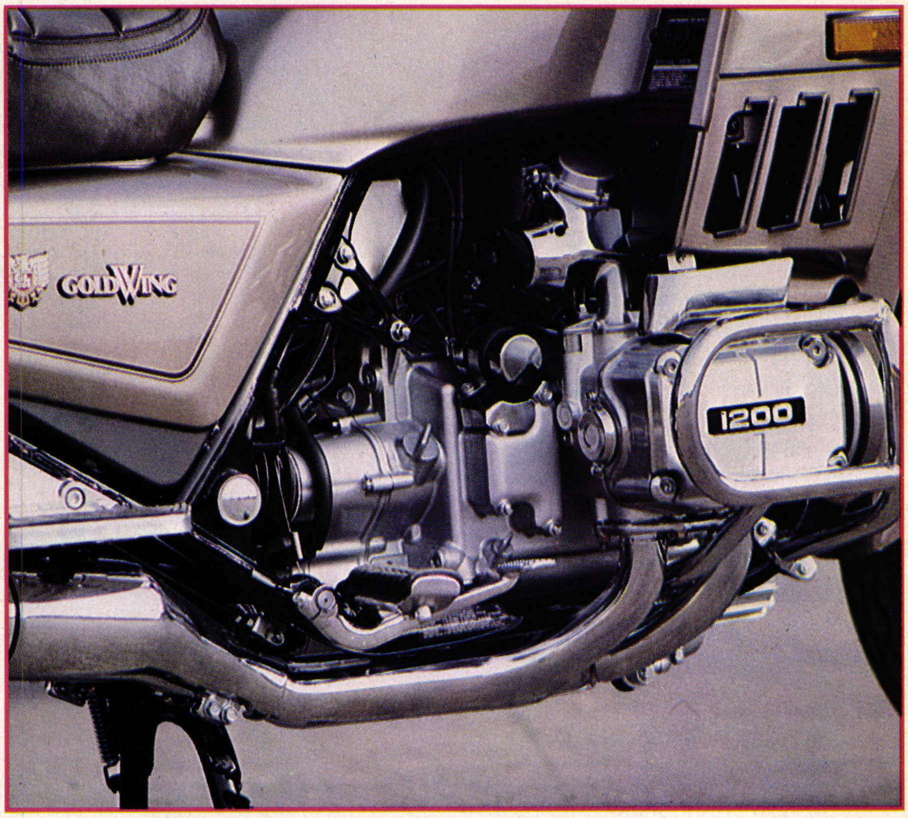
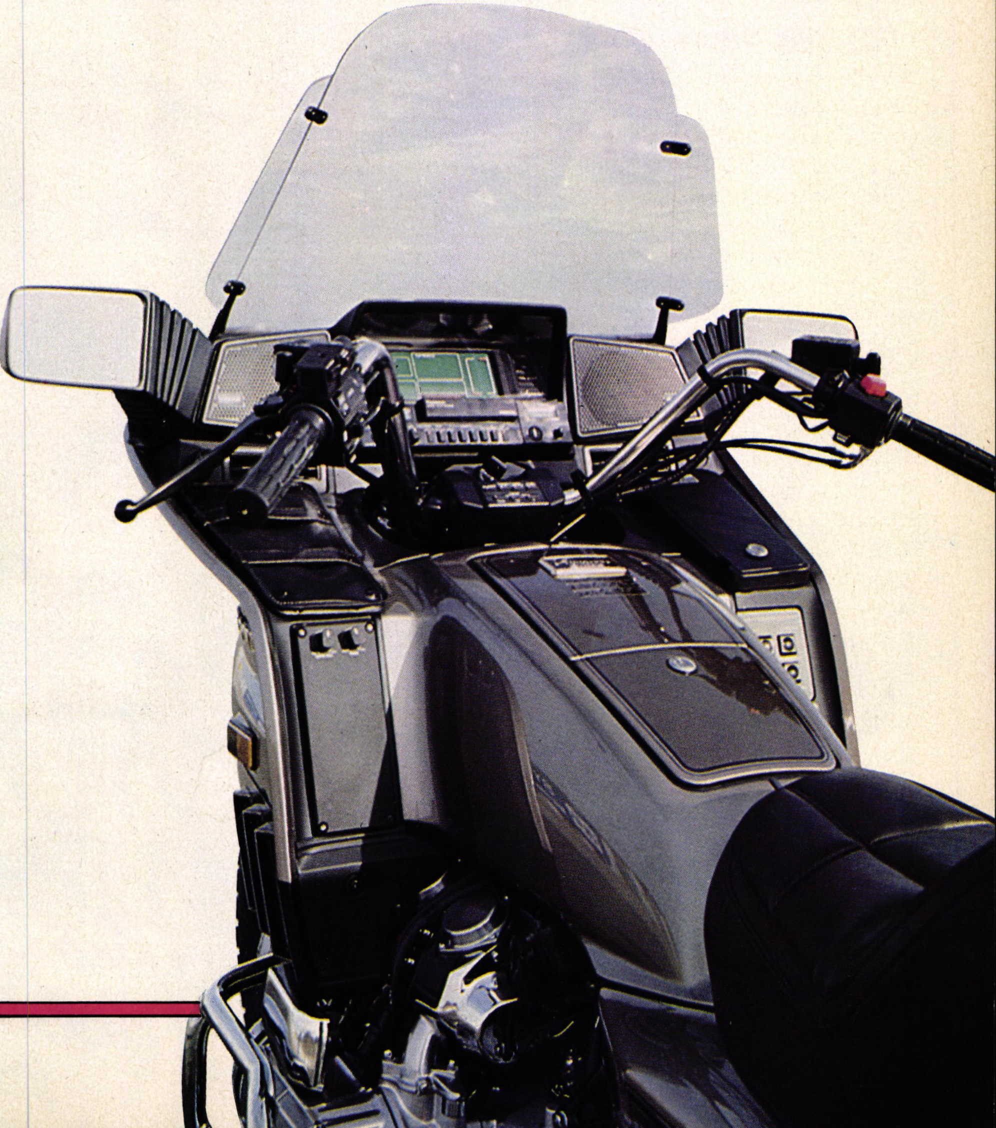

GOLDWING
1200

tour trunk also is larger and restyled, and it incorporates a full-width taillight across the back. The instrumentation this year is all-new and all-digital, and it resides in the fairing rather than atop the front fork. A completely new radio/cassette/intercom system by Panasonic (rather than Clarion) lives just below the instruments; and the control panel for the on-board air compressor (which now allows the rider to use the compressed air for chores other than inflating the suspension) has been moved to the fairing, just ahead of the rider's right knee.

Naturally, all of the Aspencade's engine/chassis refinements also apply to the bare-bones GL1200 baseline model, and to the GL1200 Interstate, which has the same fairing, bags and trunk as the Aspencade, but not the radio system and on-board air compressor. And both lower-priced GLs use conventional fork-mounted analog instrumentation.

It would seem, however, that despite all of the differences in these new models, they're still Gold Wings through and through—which ought to please everyone but the competition. After all, the unique personality of the Gold Wings is what got them to the top; and as far as Honda is concerned, just a little bit more of it will keep them there. —*Paul Dean*



Continued

• There's no point in beating around the bush: We were right. When we tested Honda's Europe/Japan-only VF400F (September 1983 issue) we predicted Honda soon would unveil a slightly larger version of the same bike. This is it, the VF500F Interceptor, a half-liter vee-four wrist-rocket that takes the best of the smaller Interceptor's traits and mixes in its own brand of lightweight goodness.

Like its larger Interceptor stablemates, this smaller-scale VF is styled in Roadrace Modern, down to its frame-mount fairing, beard cowling and works-look twin-piston brake calipers. But the real news about the junior Interceptor is its claimed dry weight of 408 pounds, more than 100 pounds lighter than the VF750F. When Honda coupled that light weight with a claimed 68 horsepower, it got a serious sport motorcycle with an impressive 136 horsepower per liter.

HONDA
500
INTERCEPTOR
V-FOUR

VF500F Interceptor

A prediction with a guarantee: Here's one middleweight flyer we know you'll like.

CYCLE GUIDE
BELL
HONDA
V-FOUR

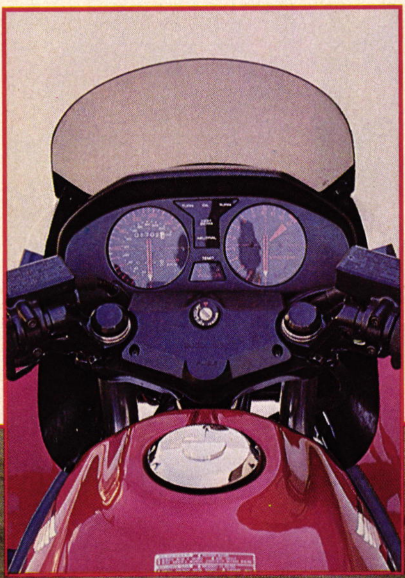
The 500's horsepower figures were achieved by stretching the bore and stroke of the 400 (55mm by 42mm) to 60mm by 44mm, for a displacement of 498cc. And, like the mini-Interceptor on which it's based, the liquid-cooled VF500F has a hydraulic clutch, 11:1 compression ratio and a 12,500-rpm redline. There's little problem keeping the engine in its powerband, either, in part because of the 500's close-ratio, six-speed gearbox. But a sky-high redline doesn't point to a motorcycle that must be wrung out hard to generate any power—at least not in the VF500's case. This small vee-four exhibits the same traits as its 750cc and 1000cc counterparts: To fall off the powerband, you almost have to turn off the ignition switch.

An engine that willingly revs to an astronomical 12,500-rpm redline, and produces good low-rpm power, too, is impressive enough, but on the VF500F the engine is merely icing on the cake. The real delight in riding this middleweight missile is in pointing it toward an apex, because in many ways, the VF's agility and excellent road manners make it even more fun to ride than the larger Interceptors. This nimble, half-liter version can be stuffed hard into a turn without the slightest twitch or wallow. And despite its relatively quick steering geometry (27 degree steering-head angle, 94mm of trail), the 500 isn't nervous at speed.

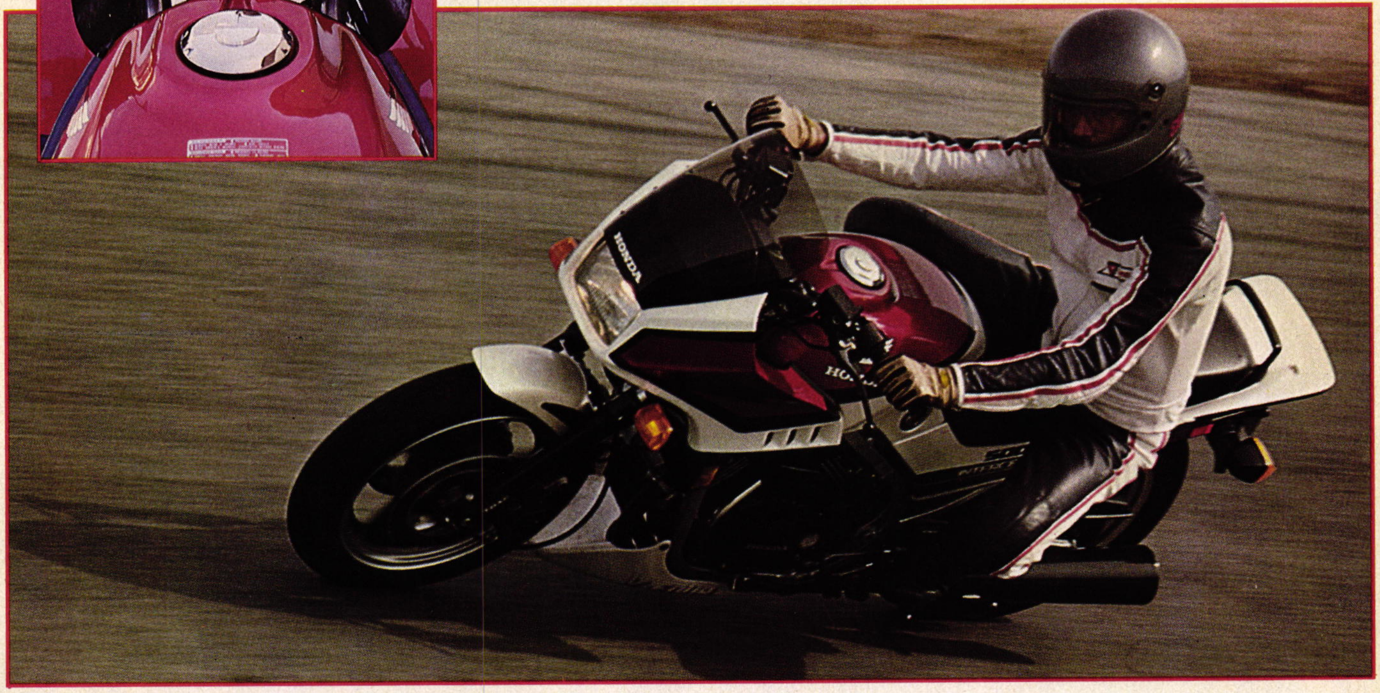
That the VF500F handles flat-out running like its larger brethren should come as no surprise, because the smaller version shares more with the 750 and 1000 Interceptors than just its name, such as a rectangular-section steel-tube frame, air-assist fork and TRAC anti-dive. And, true to the Interceptor formula, the 500's rear suspension is Pro-Link, using a single Showa shock with four-way-adjustable rebound damping. The VF500F also rolls off the assembly line fitted either with soft-compound Bridgestone or Dunlop tires, again like the bigger Interceptors. On the 500, those tires are mounted on 16-inch ComCast wheels, a WM4 in the front and a WM4.5 in the rear.

This mini-Interceptor is the smallest of its breed in Honda's American lineup, but its size doesn't make it the least noteworthy. The bike's remarkable powerband and excellent handling make it a definite contender in club-level racing this year—as well as a street-riding corner-charger's dream come true. We were particularly pleased when our prediction about the introduction of the VF500F panned out. You see, we weren't the only ones who got lucky when Honda decided to produce this bike—everyone did.

—Dain Gingerelli



V-FOUR
HONDA



Continued

• Most of motorcycling's 1983 honor graduates came from the sporting 750cc class, but there was one 750 that graduated *summa cum laude* because of its powerful, tractable engine, quick-handling chassis and all-around versatility. That bike was Honda's VF750F Interceptor, the class of the 750 class, and our pick as 1983's Motorcycle of the Year.

It only made good sense, then, for Honda to take the same basic formula and pump it up to literbike levels, and that's exactly what the company did in creating the VF1000F, a new member of the Interceptor family. To start with, Honda's engineers gave the VF750F's engine a 7mm-larger bore and a 5mm-longer stroke, bringing displacement to 998cc. The 1000's bigger bore necessitated the use of wet cylinder-liners in place of the VF750F's dry liners. But

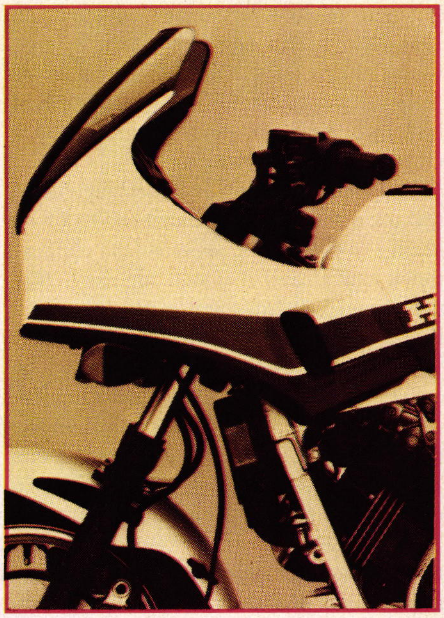
VF1000F Interceptor

The 1984 literbike class candidate for Most Likely to Succeed.

what's even more interesting is that with fourth-oversize pistons, the VF1000F would displace 1024cc, not only the upper limit for four-stroke engines in the AMA's Formula 1 roadracing class, but—not coincidentally—the same displacement as Honda's FWS 1000 roadracer.

Don't assume the VF1000F's engine is nothing more than a punched-out, longer-stroke 750, though. For instance, the bigger motor also has a stronger upper case-half, larger-diameter valves, more valve lift and slightly longer-duration camshafts than the VF750F. And while the 1000 does use a VF750F-style clutch, the literbike's has four more plates. The 1000's engine also is mounted lower in the frame than the VF750F's, which forced the bottom radiator to be relocated into the upper fairing. And that radiator is now aluminum instead of the 750's brass unit.

HONDA
INTERCEPTO
FOUR



For an Open-class streetbike, though, the bottom line is horsepower, and that's something the VF1000F has aplenty. Honda claims 113 horses for the big Interceptor, 27 more than for the VF750F. But claimed power figures can't even *begin* to describe how the VF1000F accelerates. This bike doesn't knock you back in the saddle with its power, but instead gathers speed deceptively, in an offhand, almost casual fashion as soon as you open the throttle. The exhaust note hardly changes as you hurry through the gears, and there's little sensation of speed; that is, until you suddenly notice the next corner is coming up *fast*. Like the VF750F, the 1000 Interceptor doesn't broadcast the kind of kinesthetic speed-warnings you get from other engines. And, again like the VF750F, the 1000's engine has a mile-wide powerband; there's a constant, predictable flow of power available at almost any rpm or throttle setting. There's also enough power to break the rear tire loose if you roll on the throttle too early when exiting a corner.

With so much power on tap, a rider needs a good-handling chassis to keep him out of the trouble that indiscriminate throttle-use can get him into. And the VF1000F delivers; the big Interceptor handles with the same confidence-building precision exhibited by the VF750F. The bike is reassuringly stable at racing speeds, but quick to respond to rider input. That response is not quite the instantaneous reaction of the VF750F, though; added displacement brings with it extra weight, and the VF1000F's claimed weight of 513.8 pounds is 26.5 pounds more than its three-quarter-liter counterpart. The additional avoirdupois slows down the 1000's handling.

The similarity in handling between the two Interceptors is only natural, because their chassis are remarkably alike in terms of wheelbase, steering geometry and overall configuration. There are differences, though, such as wider tires for the 1000, a 17-inch rear wheel in place of the 750's 18-incher, 41mm fork tubes (2mm larger than the 750's), a new, more easily adjusted TRAC anti-dive system with a revised linkage, and a remote three-position rebound-damping-adjuster for the single rear shock.

But Honda knew when to let well enough alone. The VF1000F retains all of the traits and character that made the VF750F one of our favorite motorcycles. The extra eye-opening horsepower packed into the engine is just gravy, and helps make the VF1000F Interceptor a candidate for the top honors in 1984's sporting-literbike class.

—Charles Everitt

Continued

• If you're looking for a "sleeper" in Honda's lineup for 1984, you've just found one. It's the Nighthawk S, a dead-nuts-serious sport motorcycle that could end up being the most surprising new streetbike of the year.

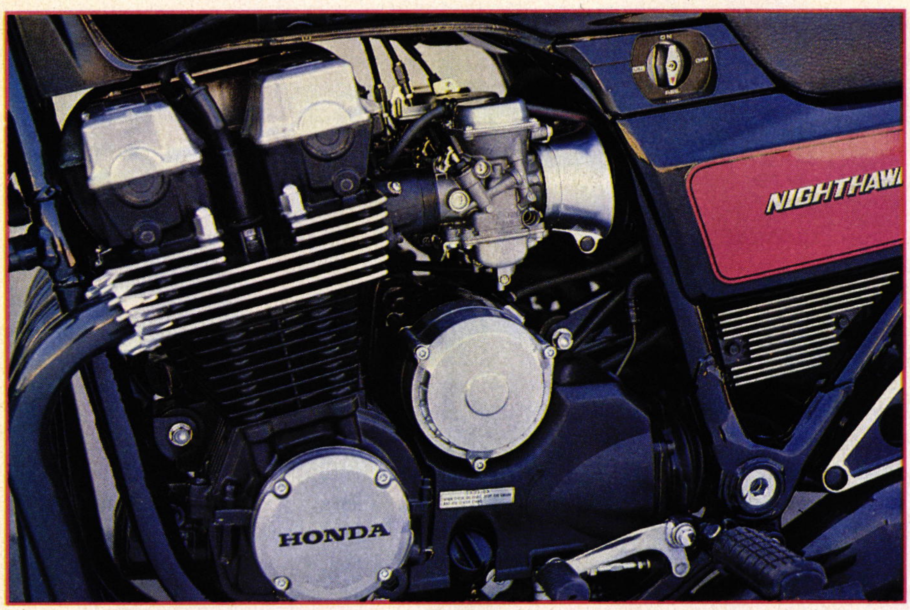
You see, no matter whether you're talking about flat-out acceleration or an ability to carve up a backroad, the Nighthawk S is almost a match for the highly acclaimed 750 Interceptor vee-four. And that's a truly astounding feat, because: 1) The S-model Nighthawk is powered by an air-cooled, inline four-cylinder engine, a configuration thought to be well on the road to sportbiking obsolescence; 2) this 750-class bike displaces just 696.7cc (to circumvent the ITC's stiff tariff on imported motorcycles of 700cc or more); and 3), most amazing of all, the Nighthawk S has *shaft drive*, for God's sake, and everyone knows that for clipping apexes and tilting the horizon over at berserko lean angles, shafties simply can't cut it.

Well, everyone apparently is wrong. Because around Willow Springs' nine tricky turns, the S-model seemed perfectly at home, despite its alleged "disadvantages." The twin-shock sportbike refused to wiggle in the least or to exhibit any shaft-induced chassis gyrations, and it could be pitched into a fast turn as willingly and as easily as any other 750-class pavement-scratcher we've ridden. And the S accelerated *hard* between 8000 rpm and its 10,750-rpm redline; so hard, in fact, that based on our experience with its predecessor, the 650 Nighthawk, the S ought to dip well into the elevens.

Don't make the mistake, though, of thinking this bike is just a punched-out, dressed-up 650 Nighthawk. For although the S-type engine uses the same basic design—a narrow, rubber-mounted, dohc inline four with 16 hydraulically adjusted valves, a generator mounted behind the cylinders, and a six-speed gearbox—the execution is different. The 67mm bore is 7mm larger than the 650's, but the 49.4mm stroke is 8.6mm *shorter*; the engine cases are longer and the transmission shafts are repositioned for simplification of case-machining and ease of gearbox-assembly; and the oiling system has been improved to reduce the size of the sump (permitting a lower crankshaft

Nighthawk S

In the defense for transverse-four, shaft-drive sportbikes, label this Exhibit S.

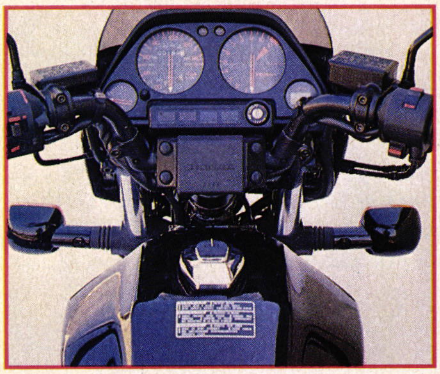


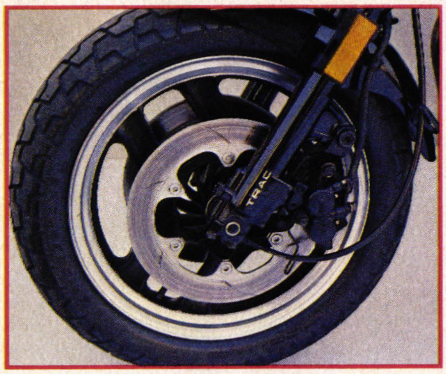
placement) and to eliminate the problem of collapsed hydraulic valve adjusters that the 650 occasionally suffered during sustained high-rpm operation.

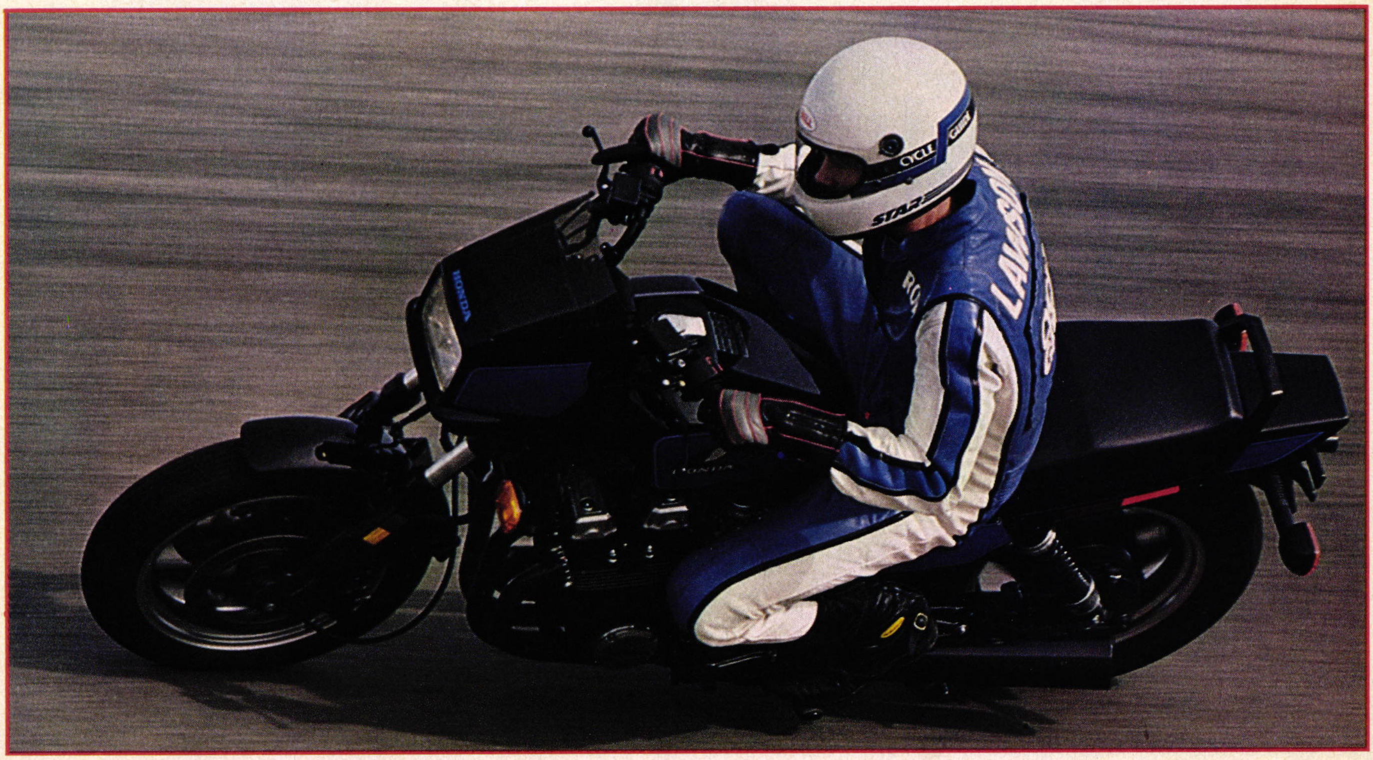
So, too, is the S-model's chassis similar to, but notably different than, the 650's. The S has a 1.6-inch-longer wheelbase, an inline-axle fork (the 650 has a leading axle) and—in keeping with current sport/roadrace technology—a 16-inch wheel up front, as well a rear 16-incher carried over from the 650. But bodywork is entirely new, borrowing a page from the California Hot Rod styling manual with a trim quarter-fairing, a black-chromed and throaty-sounding 4-into-2 exhaust, and simulated velocity stacks on the 34mm CV carbs.

Those stacks, however, are the only "fake" aspect of the Nighthawk S, a motorcycle that is no paper tiger. It's fast enough, light enough (469.7-pound claimed weight) and agile enough to hold its own in the twisties against the best 750s in the business. That is why it's going to change some long-standing notions about how shafties relate to sport riding—and why the next time someone insists that shaft-drive transverse fours do not make competent backroad-blitzers, you can bet on one thing: He won't try to prove his point with a Nighthawk S.

—Paul Dean







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• As the smallest member of its family, the V30 carries the Magna banner into the middleweight cruiser ranks. And as you'd expect, the mini-Magna is adorned with standard cruiser regalia: a high handlebar, forward-set footpegs, a teardrop tank, a short front fender, a fat rear tire and lots of chrome.

Yet despite those boulevard accoutrements, the V30 breaks with the Magna formula in several ways, the most obvious of which is the V30's chain drive. That type of final drive is used because the V30 engine is not based on the larger Magna/Sabre engines, but on the VF500F Interceptor's engine. The two 498cc vee-fours have in common not only bore and stroke, but carburetors, compression ratio and camshafts. In fact, the only differences between the two engines are a more-restrictive airbox, smaller muffler-volume and a 500-rpm-lower redline on the V30, which accounts for the four-horsepower difference in claimed power figures between the 500cc Magna and Interceptor. But a claimed 64 horsepower still makes the V30 the most muscular of the Magna family—even more than the muscle-bound V65—on a horsepower-per-liter basis.

Another area in which the V30 sets new standards for the family is in weight—or more precisely, the lack of weight. According to Honda's figures, the V30 is a whopping 88 pounds lighter than the next-larger Magna, and more than 140 pounds lighter than the V65 Magna. In fact, the mini-Magna's claimed dry weight of 401.3 pounds makes it the lightest four-cylinder motorcycle in Honda's U.S. lineup, seven pounds less than even the VF500F Interceptor.

Yet despite its light weight and small size, the mini-Magna is not limited to mini-sized riders. Overall, the V30 provides much of the riding position of a larger bike. The ergonomic setup of the forward-mount footpegs and pullback handlebar isn't as extreme as it is on the larger Magnas, and as a result, the V30 could be the best of the Magnas in terms of riding position and comfort.

That semi-cruiser riding position is not, however, conducive to hardcore corner-charging. While the bike responds well to body English, the forward placement of the footpegs and the wide, pullback handlebar make hanging off seem like a workout on a jungle gym. Nonetheless, the V30 behaved itself quite well around Willow Springs. The bike's single front disc and rear drum brakes offered good feel and adequate power. At high speeds, the suspension felt soft and underdamped, which caused a slight twitch as the suspension bottomed in fast corners. But the twitch never felt disconcerting, and the bike regained its composure quickly. Although the V30's suspension is biased toward the boulevard, its engine seemed right at home on the track. Its power delivery is typical of the Honda vee-fours—very smooth, with good low-end and midrange power and a noticeable horsepower surge above 6000 rpm. The only glitch in the engine's performance was its tendency to stall when the throttle was cracked open after the engine had run at idle for a minute or so. Once above idle, however, throttle response was excellent all the way to the 12,000-rpm redline.

A cruiser on a racetrack is a bit like a Budweiser Clydesdale in the Kentucky Derby, but the V30's performance at Willow Springs indicated that the littlest Magna might well be the best one yet. Don't be fooled by its chrome and cruiser accoutrements; underneath all that glitter lies high performance. *—Jim Miller*

V30 Magna

Latest addition to the light-cruiser class.

V65 Sabre

Horsepower never goes out of style.

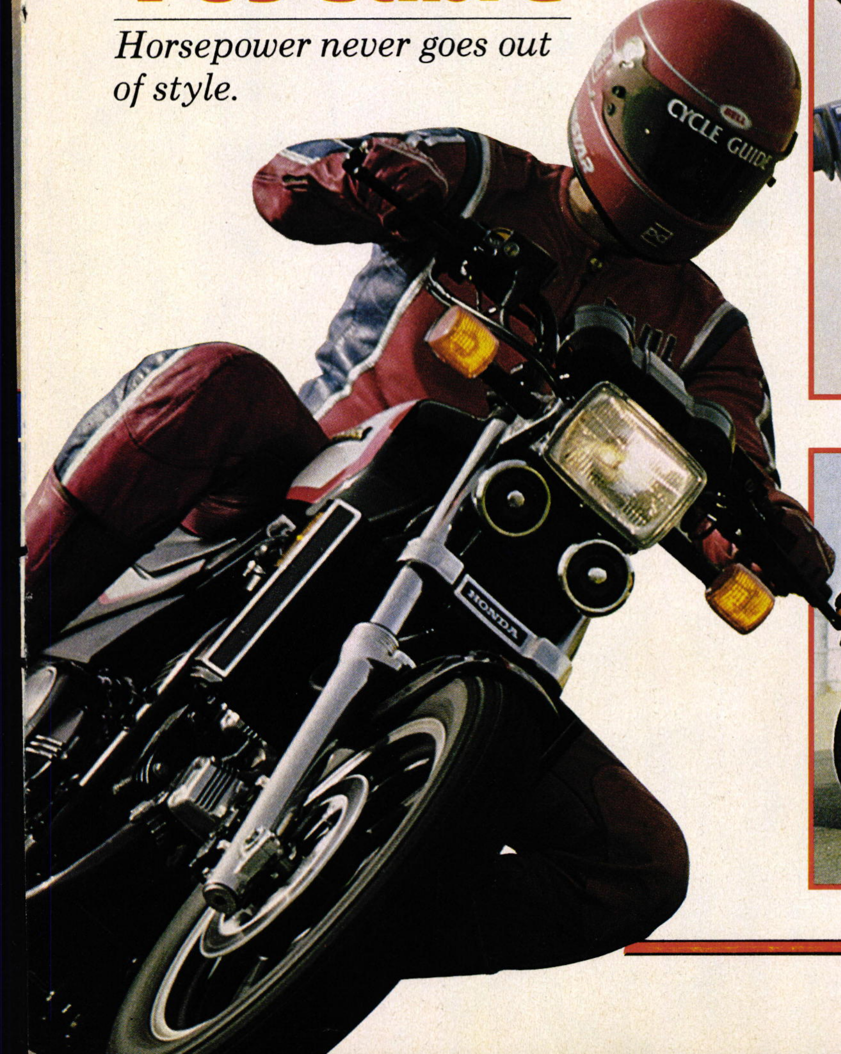
• Horsepower always sells, regardless of its form. The V65 Magna, Honda's cruiser/musclebike of 1983, demonstrated that point last year by climbing to second place on the corporate sales chart, right behind the 750 vee-twin Shadow. This year Honda is using the tried-and-true musclebike approach again, but this time in a sportier package: the V65 Sabre. The machine is a crossbreed, combining Sabre styling with Magna might. In fact, the newest Sabre has even more power than the V65 Magna, and it promises to be the quickest Honda ever.

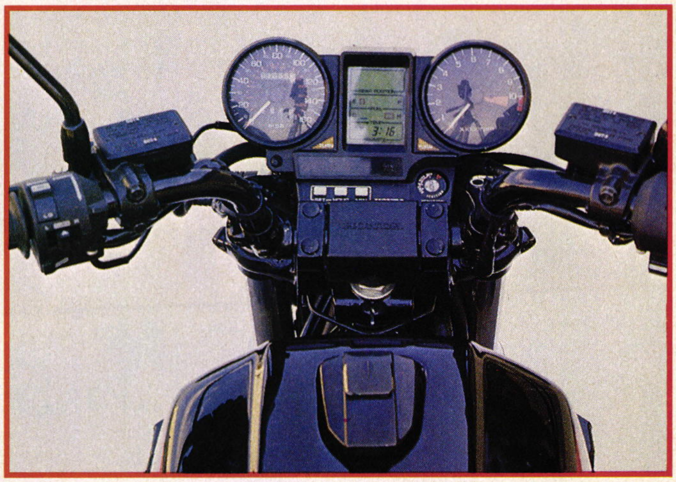
The power boost was accomplished through a number of modifications to the V65 powerplant. Different valve timing, a less-restrictive intake system, larger carburetor venturis, reshaped intake ports, and a new exhaust system all combine to make the Sabre what should be Honda's new quarter-mile flagship.

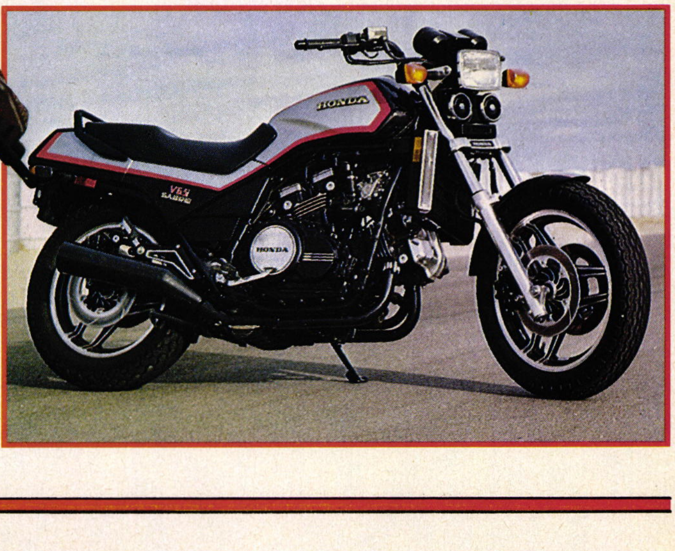
Saying that any bike has more power than the V65 Magna, of course, is saying a lot. But that claim can be made of the Sabre, because not only does its top-end horsepower top that of the Magna, it rivals the peak horsepower of any streetbike made. And the bike's low end is even *better.* The power comes on so early and climbs so smoothly it's actually difficult to know what rpm the engine is turning. You only know that it's making power, and if you do watch the tach, you'll soon learn that it's possible to go very fast without exceeding 5000 rpm.

Don't, however, expect the Sabre to be a roadracer. The bike is fast, and it certainly has more of a sporting intent than the Magna, but for down-to-asphalt canyon-racing, look elsewhere. The Sabre simply isn't meant for that kind of riding. For example, the handlebar is too wide and too high to allow the rider to move forward easily, and also makes holding on difficult when the bike is accelerating. And you'll quickly find that the big Sabre's ground clearance isn't up to Interceptor standards. But the biggest obstacle standing between the Sabre and the track is the bike's large, heavy feel, which places considerable demands on the man behind the bars.

One reason for that feeling is that the bike *is* large. Honda didn't just bolt a big engine into a V45 chassis; the Sabre's frame is new, and bigger in every dimension. The result of that redesign is a tall, long-wheelbased motorcycle that's remarkably stable. The Sabre is so stable, in fact, that it can make high speeds deceiving. Speeds of 100 mph seem more like 50, and at 50 you feel like you're barely moving. That kind of stability makes the V65 a natural for sport-touring, or even for straight-line tours on the Interstate. And to enhance the bike's touring talent, Hondaline offers several accessories that make the Sabre into a high-horsepower alternative to the Gold Wing. By 1984 standards, it's an affordable alternative, too. The Sabre is assembled in Honda's Ohio plant, so the bike isn't subject to the ITC import tariff. That means the Sabre not only is a contender for musclebike of the year, but in terms of horsepower-per-dollar, it might be the buy of the year. *—Ron Lawson* •







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HONDA
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Close. But no cigar.

HONDA
FOLLOW THE LEADER

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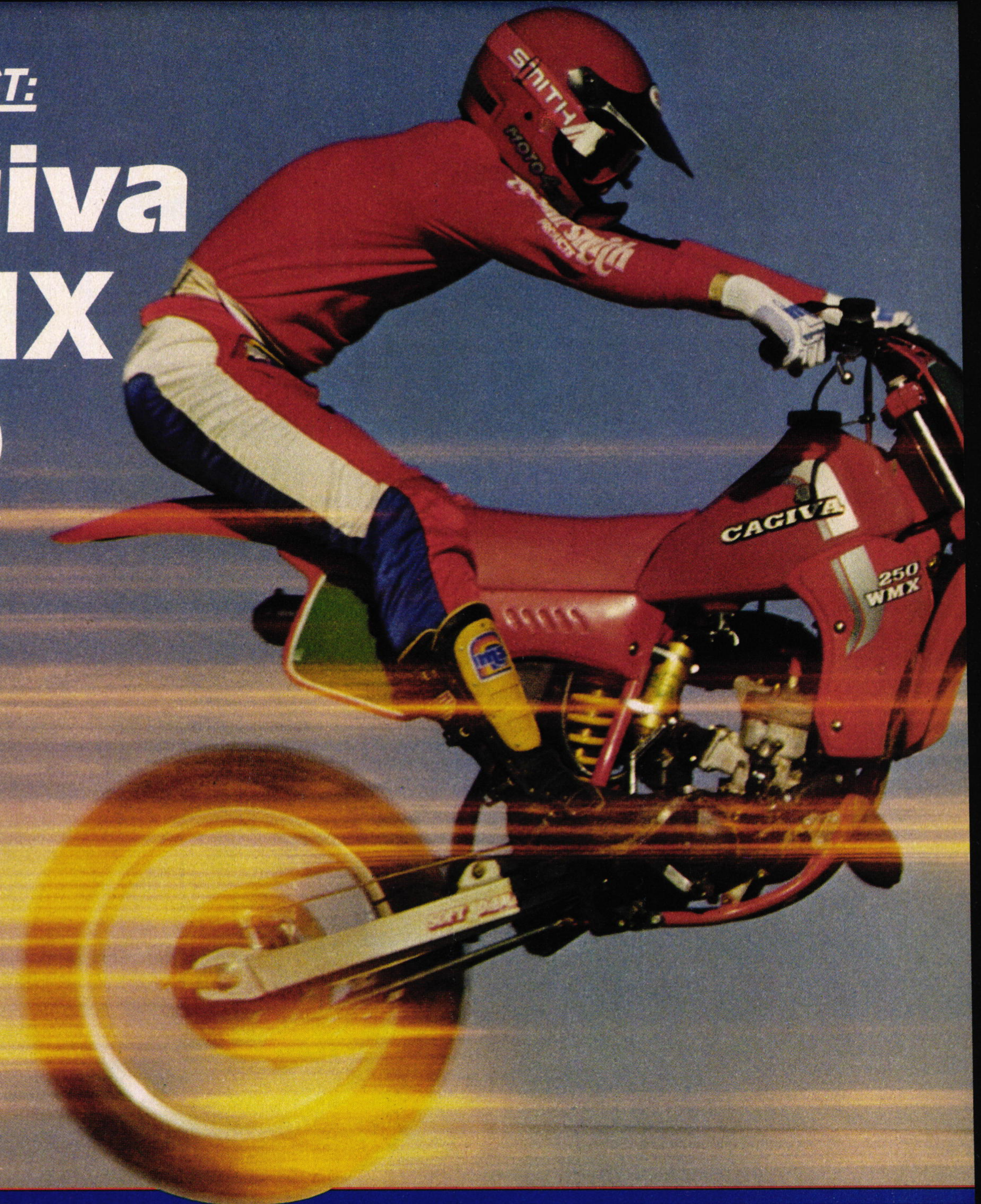
TRACK TEST:

Cagiva WMX 250

BY RON LAWSON



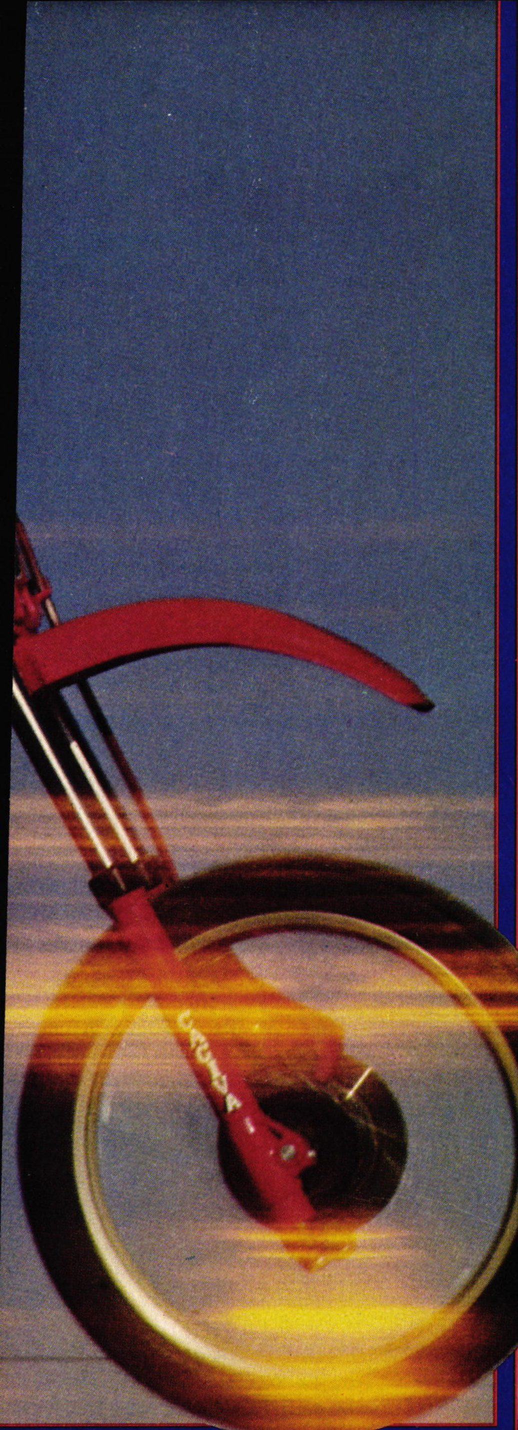
Can 190cc of 125 win in the 250 class?

The Ultimate Motocross Bike has been around for years. But so far, this unbeatable MX weapon has only won hypothetical races on imaginary tracks, because it has existed only in theory. With the WMX 250, though, an Italian company called Cagiva has attempted to take this theoretical racer and turn it into a berm-busting, reality.

This Ultimate MXer theory is based on the fact that, aside from outright acceleration, 125s do virtually everything more efficiently than 250s. What a 125 lacks in sheer power compared to a 250 is offset by its greater agility and responsiveness, which not only makes the smaller bike more maneuverable but less-tiring to ride, as well. And that explains why, on most tracks, 125s turn lap times comparable to—sometimes better than—those clocked by 250s.

If you try actually racing a 125 against 250s, though, you quickly learn that lap times aren't everything. The 125 is last into the first turn, and it gets left in the dust on the straights. And the small bike's advantages in tight turns are usually nullified simply because the 250s take lines that conflict with those a 125 must use. So in truth, The Ultimate MXer would have to be a 125 that accelerates as well as a 250. But the answer is not merely to put a 250cc top end on a 125cc motor, because by the time the drivetrain and the chassis were beefed up to withstand the stress provided by the added horsepower, the machine would end up being a full-size 250. And in the process, the handling advantages offered by the original 125 would disappear.

Cagiva's solution to this problem was to attempt a reasonable compromise by starting with its 125cc motocrosser and upping the displacement only to 190cc. That increase was deemed small enough to preclude the need for massive changes in the chassis and drivetrain, but large enough, it was hoped, to allow the machine to run competitively with full-size 250s on the straights. The result, Cagiva figured, was sure to be the perfect bal-



PHOTOGRAPHY © 1984 DAVID DEWHURST

ance between force and finesse.

Whether Cagiva figured right or wrong, the resultant motorcycle is clearly different. The WMX 250 isn't much like any Japanese 250, obviously, and with its space-age appearance and 125-like power delivery, it bears practically no resemblance to other European motocrossers. But that shouldn't be too surprising, since the whole idea behind The Ultimate Motocrosser theory is to have a bike that approaches a conventional problem in an unconventional way. Motocross riders, on the other hand, simply want a bike that offers the best chance of winning. And that's not measured in hypothetical wins but in real-world racing.

Continued

Tech Inspection:

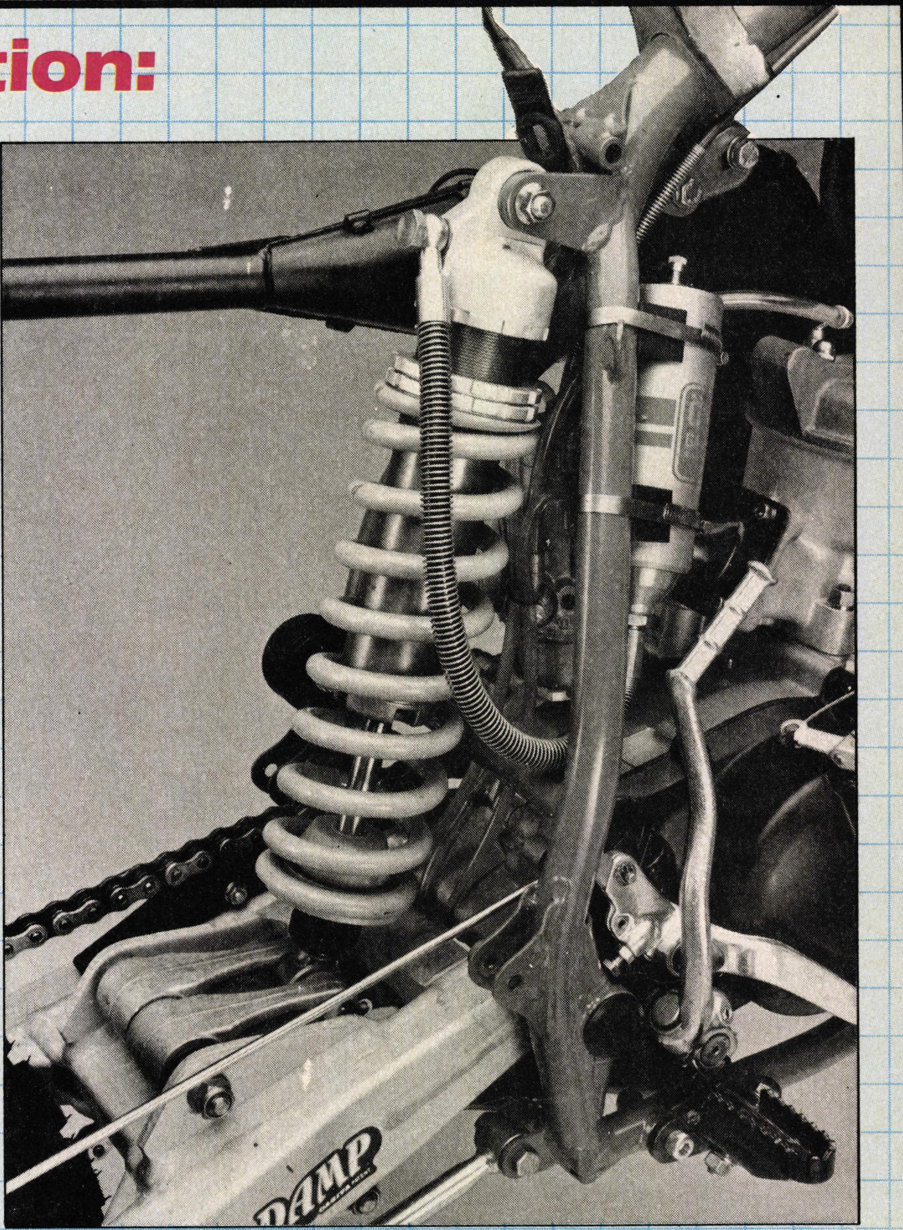
ENGINE:

In most ways, the WMX 250 is little more than a bored-and-stroked WMX 125. But because the two engines had to share so many parts, it was impractical for the 250 to displace more than 190cc. The 54mm stroke is the longest that would work within the existing cases; and Cagiva felt that exceeding the 190 engine's 67mm bore would make the motor so oversquare that the increase in displacement would be offset by a decrease in efficiency.

A concern for efficiency also is evident in the design of the WMX 250's linerless cylinder, which is manufactured by the Italian firm Gilardoni. To better dissipate the heat of combustion, the walls of the aluminum cylinder are electronically sprayed with a nickel-silicon coating called Gil-Sil, which is harder than a steel liner or even a chrome coating, and although the layer is too thin (0.01 inch) to be bored, the cylinder can be honed, and Cagiva offers Mahle oversize pistons in four unusually small increments of 0.01mm (0.004-inch) each as replacements.

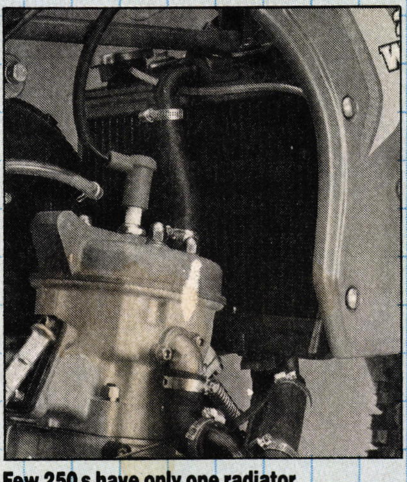
Cagiva's use of this particular coating in a motocross cylinder is unconventional, but BMW has used a nickel-silicon cylinder-coating for several years. And a similar process, called Electrofusion, is used in most of Kawasaki's two-stroke cylinders. There's also a touch of Kawasaki in the Cagiva's exhaust-port design, which employs one large, unbridged main port flanked by two small auxiliary ports. And aside from being unusually well-finished, the rest of the WMX 250's porting could have come from almost any Japanese MX engine. The bridged intake port is fed through a typical six-petal reed valve, and the four main transfer ports are assisted by a single booster that extends upward from the intake.

There's also a Japanese flavor to the Cagiva's liquid-cooling system. But instead of using two small radiators, as do most current water-pumpers, the WMX has one large copper-core radiator manufactured in Japan by ND, the same company that makes radiators for some Japanese MXers. ND also supplies the Cagiva's internal-rotor ignition. The 250's Dell'Orto carburetor, though, is an Italian component, and features an additional fuel circuit designed to sharpen the engine response at smallish throttle openings.



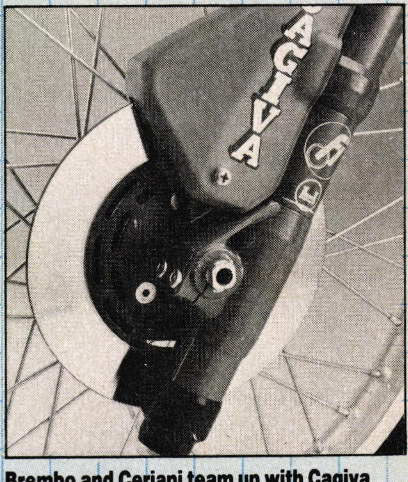
An Ohlins shock and Soft Damp linkage make up the Cagiva's rear suspension

Similar to other systems on paper, but different on the track.



Few 250 s have only one radiator

A 125 heritage showing through.



Brembo and Ceriani team up with Cagiva

So smooth rides come to quick stops.

DRIVETRAIN:

Almost all of the WMX 250 lower end is common to the 125, right down to the ratios in the six-speed gearbox. To raise the overall gearing, though, the primary- and final-drive ratios were lowered numerically. The clutch, which also is the same as the 125's, is similar in design to those in most Japanese bikes, and has seven fiber drive plates and six aluminum driven plates.

What is not typical, however, is the sizable distance between the Cagiva's countershaft and its swingarm pivot. This allows considerable chain-tension variation as the rear wheel swings through its long arc. This is the result of Cagiva's use of the same basic engine for numerous models, including some short-travel street and dual-purpose bikes. That also explains the engine's unused provisions for an oil pump and tachometer drive.

CHASSIS:

Front Suspension: The 250's fork is a Ceriani (rather than a Marzocchi as used on the WMX 125) because it better accommodates this model's Brembo front disc brake. At 40mm, the stanchion-tube diameter is the same as the 125's. Each fork slider has a removable housing that enables the fork seals to be replaced without complete fork disassembly.

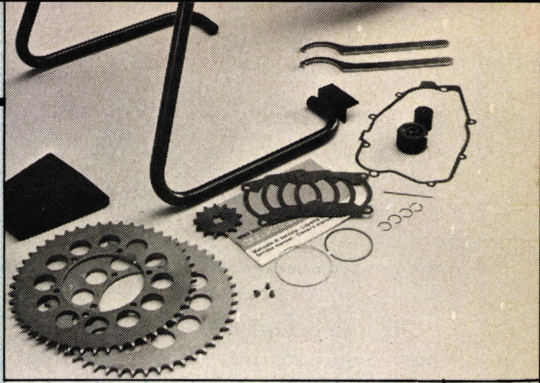
Rear Suspension: Cagiva calls its particular single-shock rear suspension "Soft Damp." The system is similar to Honda's Pro-Link, using aluminum links to achieve rates of springing and damping that increase as the rear wheel moves upward. The Cagiva uses an Ohlins shock incorporating 30 damping settings that simultaneously change compression and rebound damping.

Frame: The 250 and 125 have identical frames, which gave the 250 an unusually short wheelbase. But the frame's configuration is typical of modern MX frame design. A single downtube splits into two smaller tubes in front of the cylinder to accommodate the center-port exhaust. And the rear section of the frame detaches to simplify shock access. The Cagiva's swingarm is made of aluminum, unlike those of most other European MX bikes.

Wheels: Green-label Akront rims are used on both wheels. At the rear, there's a full-floating brake working in a conical hub. In front, the hub is full-width and bolts to a Brembo hydraulic disc brake.

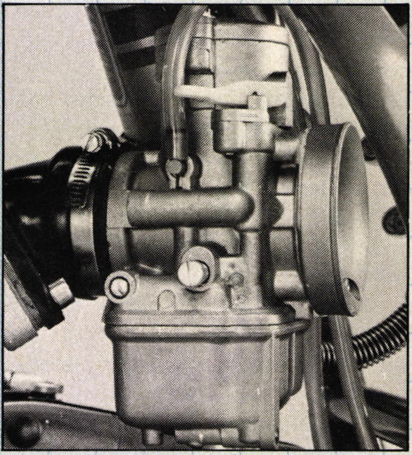
DETAILS:

The cap on the straight-pull throttle housing can be popped off with a flick of the thumb to facilitate quick cable changes. A single-piece, dual-stage foam element filters the Cagiva's air, and the airbox features an auxiliary lid to help prevent water entry under extremely wet conditions. The bike is delivered with other extras, too, such as a 13-tooth countershaft sprocket, 48- and 49-tooth rear sprockets, extra jets and gaskets, a piston-ring and circlips, two spanner wrenches for rear-shock preload adjustment, and a combination centerstand/sidestand. And for those with exceptionally large feet, Cagiva offers an optional longer brake pedal.



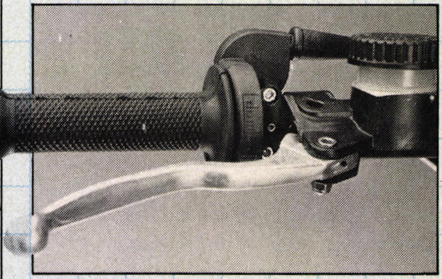
Every WMX comes with extra parts

Cagiva expects the bike to be used.



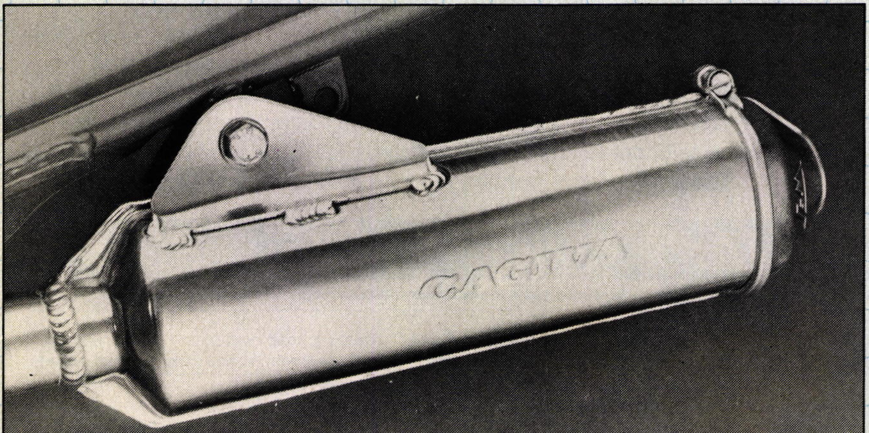
A Dell'Orto Carb feeds the Italian engine

Through six fiber reed-petals.



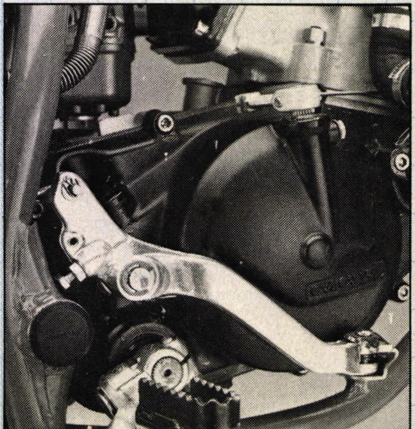
Throttle and levers are among the best

Grips are among the worst.



The WMX 250's aluminum silencer tips the scales at well under two pounds

But the Cagiva still weighs more than most 250s—or any 125.



Aluminum brake pedal mounts to case

With the first folding tip that works.

Will It Win?

The idea behind the WMX 250 is admirable and exciting. After all, any bike designed to have the power of a 250 and the agility of a 125 ought to be practically unbeatable on a motocross track. But just because the WMX 250 was designed that way doesn't necessarily mean it successfully accomplishes that goal.

Admittedly, the Cagiva generates just enough horsepower to keep up with bikes in the 250 class, despite its 60cc handicap. In numerous start-line dragraces we staged with '83 Honda and Yamaha 250s, the WMX 250 gave away very little in top-end power. But shoehorning that much performance into a 190cc engine had the predictable side-effect of making the engine pipey. You might think that's no big deal, since 125s are pipey, too, which doesn't stop them from turning good lap times. But the Cagiva actually seems pipier than most 125s, not because the 190 puts out less low-end power than a small-bore, but rather because it makes so much more top-end power. The revs climb slowly down in the no-pull zone, then the engine seems to release all its power at once, making for a very explosive 250.

Still, if you keep the 190cc engine from falling off its power curve, the bike accelerates about as quickly as an average 250. And keeping the revs in the high-rpm power range is fairly easy if you're prepared to shift often and fan the clutch a lot. If you have a lapse in concentration, though, and let the revs drop too low, you'll lose time getting back into the powerband.

At least the Cagiva usually handles controllably while in its high-rpm power zone. The bike is exceptionally nose-heavy, so it's not the least bit wheelie-prone, and the front wheel sticks to its line quite well, especially on sandy courses. On harder tracks, the stock Pirelli Sandcross tires don't grip very well, and we had much better luck with a Pirelli Garacross on the front and a Bridgestone M22 in back.

No matter what tire is used, though, traction is critical with the Cagiva. Even though the front end usually goes where it's pointed, the rear has a difficult time containing the engine's sudden blasts of power. This means that getting around slick or off-camber corners quickly can be a problem. If there's a berm in sight, though, the WMX is right at home. The bike is very agile, and it responds to the flick-it-over-and-gas-it technique of turning as well as any 125. This isn't due to the Cagiva's lack of weight, however, because at 221 pounds, it actually weighs more than most Japanese 250 motocrossers. Nevertheless, the Cagiva still feels relatively small and light because its center of gravity is low and its wheelbase is short.

In fact, the Cagiva's true weight is only noticeable on extremely rough terrain, where the bike can be as hard to hold on course as any full-size 250, if not even more so. And the suspension is the biggest culprit. The Ohlins shock bottoms easily, on moderate bumps as well as on larger ones, even though Cagiva recommends about 25 percent more preload than most companies do for their rear suspensions. This indicates that the stock spring is too soft, so we replaced the original 7.5kg spring with a 8.5kg Ohlins spring. The bike then handled much better over most rough whoops and jumps; but the stiffer spring overpowered the damper, causing the rear end to kick up on sharp-edged bumps and ruts. And, because the Ohlins' damping adjustment alters both rebound and compression damping, turning the adjuster didn't help, since any setting that gave the right rebound rate delivered too much compression damping.

Dialing-in the fork was easier. When we first got the bike, the front end rebounded too quickly and bottomed too easily, so we replaced the thin stock oil with SAE 10 at a level of 5.5 inches (recommended level is 6 inches). This gave

COMPARATIVE TEST DATA:

Make and Model	Wheel Travel, Front/Rear, in.	Weight (fuel tank empty), lb.	Weight bias, Front/Rear, percent	Steering head angle/Trail, degrees/inches	Transmission, number of speeds
Cagiva WMX 250-'83	11.9/12.7	221	49.8/50.2	28.0/4.65	6
Honda CR250R-'84	11.7/12.2	216	48.4/51.6	26.7/4.13	5
Husqvarna 250 CR-'83	11.8/12.7	227	47.4/52.6	30.0/5.51	6
Kawasaki KX250-'83	11.8/12.1	224	48.7/51.3	28.5/4.65	5
Suzuki RM250-'83	10.7/12.4	219	47.9/52.1	29.7/4.84	5
Yamaha YZ250-'83	11.3/12.3	217	47.9/52.1	28.0/4.69	5

better wheel control over all kinds of terrain. And while the front suspension still occasionally bottomed, rarely did it do so harshly.

There's also nothing harsh about the action of the bike's Brembo front disc brake. Contrary to popular belief about dirt discs, the Cagiva's front brake always was very controllable and progressive. We did notice a bit of brake fade after 30 minutes of hard riding, but even then the disc was more effective than most single-leading-shoe brakes. Unfortunately, the drum rear brake isn't anywhere near as useful as the front disc. The rear brake doesn't have much stopping power, yet it often locks up unexpectedly if you push hard on the pedal.

In fact, that sort of good news/bad news situation pretty much tells the story of the WMX 250: Every strong point in the bike's performance seems to be countered by a weakness in the same area. Still, the Cagiva is worthy of consideration by certain 250-class riders. Those racing on a budget will appreciate the WMX 250's low price, hundreds of dollars less than its competition. And young riders just moving up into the 250 class might find the transition easier on a machine that behaves so much like a 125. But for just about everyone else, the WMX 250 offers no real advantages in power, in suspension or, most important, in the one area in which this upsized 125 was supposed to excel: handling.

None of this means, however, that The Ultimate Motocrosser, that perfect combination of 250-class power and 125-class handling, can never be achieved. It can be. But based on the Cagiva's performance, the theory is not yet reality.

Nits

1. Excessive vibration transmitted to rider.
2. Grips are hard and abrasive.
3. Fuel leaks from gas cap.
4. Large brake reservoir limits lever positioning.
5. Numberplates are too small to conform to AMA rules.

Picks

1. Throttle control disassembles easily.
2. Dogleg levers are well-shaped.
3. Extra parts and combination sidestand/centerstand included with motorcycle.
4. Cagiva offers optional longer brake lever.

Ride Review

- It would be easy to conclude that since the WMX 250 is out of the hunt, so is the company that built it. But any such assumption would be dead-wrong. We're not talking about some little pea-shooter outfit that pieces together bikes one at a time in a back-alley garage. Nossir, we're talking about Cagiva, a company that not only is the No. 1 manufacturer of motorcycles in Italy, but is the No. 5 seller of two-wheelers—right behind the Big Four Japanese.

You don't have to look very far to find evidence of Cagiva's expertise. The WMX 250 is a beautifully built motorcycle, one that seems intelligently designed, well-thought-out and fabricated from top-grade materials. The overall fit and finish, too, is of such exceptional quality that in some cases, it even exceeds the high standards set by the Japanese. Even Cagiva's repair manuals, parts systems and parts-packaging techniques are impressive.

That's why, regardless of what you think about the WMX 250, you shouldn't underestimate this company, which is in just the beginning stages of expanding not only the size of its operation in this country, but the competence of its motorcycles, as well. The name Cagiva might not mean a lot right now, but it will. Bet on it. *—Paul Dean*

- If, like me, you've watched racers like O'Mara and Barnett and wondered what it must be like to ride a nimble 125cc factory bike with enough horsepower to blow away 250s, Cagiva has just provided part of the answer. The WMX 250 has all the reflexes of a 125, yet its steroid-stuffed 190cc motor really can keep up with many full-sized 250s.

Not that you think about 250s when you climb aboard the Cagiva. The tiny red tank and close-coupled riding position left me in no doubt that I was about to ride a 125. The motor didn't do anything to shatter that illusion, and after two laps I was in full 125cc mode, frantically grabbing for the clutch lever and hitting every section of track with the throttle pegged. The Cagiva motor demanded all that and more, but it rewarded me with a faster ride than any 125 I had known. The useless rear brake and less-than-perfect suspension didn't matter, because I was absorbed in racing the fastest 125 that money could buy.

That's when the kid on the 250 Honda roosted around me. I could stay with him down the straight, but out of turns and in rough sections he left me and the Cagiva for dead. My dream ride had been shattered, and the world's fastest 125 was suddenly just a mediocre 250. *—David Dewhurst*

Continued

CYCLE GUIDE SPECIFICATIONS

Cagiva WMX 250

motocross

IMPORTER: Cagiva North America Inc., 20030 South Normandie Avenue, Torrance, California 90502

SUGGESTED RETAIL PRICE: $2295

ENGINE

Type	liquid-cooled two-stroke vertical single
Port arrangement	one reed-valve-controlled intake, four main transfers, one booster transfer, one main exhaust, two booster exhausts
Bore and stroke	67.0mm x 54.0mm
Displacement	190.4cc
Compression ratio (uncorrected)	16.1:1
Carburetion	one 36mm Dell'Orto slide/needle
Air filter	two-stage washable oiled foam element
Lubrication	pre-mixed fuel and oil
Starting system	primary kick
Ignition	internal-rotor magneto CDI
Charging system	none

DRIVETRAIN

Primary drive	straight-cut gears; 3.211:1 ratio
Clutch	wet, multi-plate
Final drive	#520 chain (5/8-in. pitch, 1/4-in. width); 3.429:1 (48/14) ratio

Gear	Internal gear ratio	Overall gear ratio	MPH per 1000 RPM
I	2.273	25.017	3.11
II	1.786	19.656	3.96
III	1.467	16.144	4.83
IV	1.250	13.759	5.66
V	1.105	12.166	6.40
VI	1.000	11.008	7.08

SUSPENSION/WHEEL TRAVEL

Front	Ceriani, 40mm stanchion tube diameter/11.9 in. (301mm)
Rear	single Ohlins shock, 49-position simultaneously adjustable compression and rebound damping, 34mm spring preload range/12.7 in. (322mm)

BRAKES

Front	double-action hydraulic caliper, 9.0-in. (229mm) effective disc diameter
Rear	drum, single-leading-shoe, rod-operated

TIRES

Front	3.00-21 51M Pirelli MT32 Sandcross
Rear	4.25-18 66M Pirelli MT32 Sandcross

DIMENSIONS AND CAPACITIES

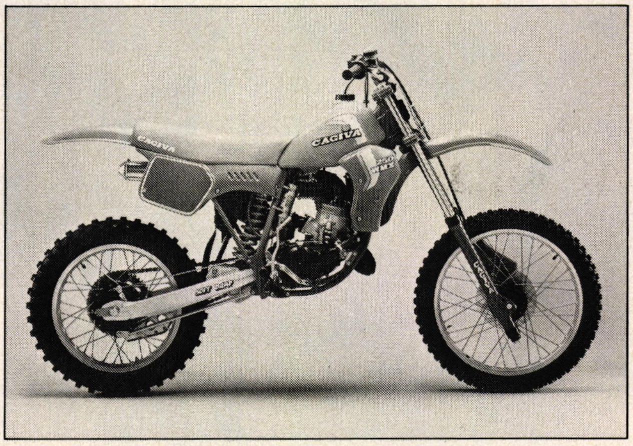
Weight	221 lbs. (100.2kg)
Weight distribution	49.8% front, 50.2% rear
Wheelbase	57.5 to 58.8 in. (1460 to 1493mm)
Seat height	37.8 in. (961mm)
Handlebar width	32.2 in. (817mm)
Footpeg height	17.4 in. (443mm)
Ground clearance	12.9 in. (327mm), at shock linkage
Steering head angle	28.0 degrees from vertical
Front wheel trail	4.65 in. (118mm)
Frame	tubular chromoly steel, single front downtube
Fuel tank	plastic, 2.1 gal. (8.0*l*), including 0.4 gal. (1.5*l*) reserve
Instrumentation	none

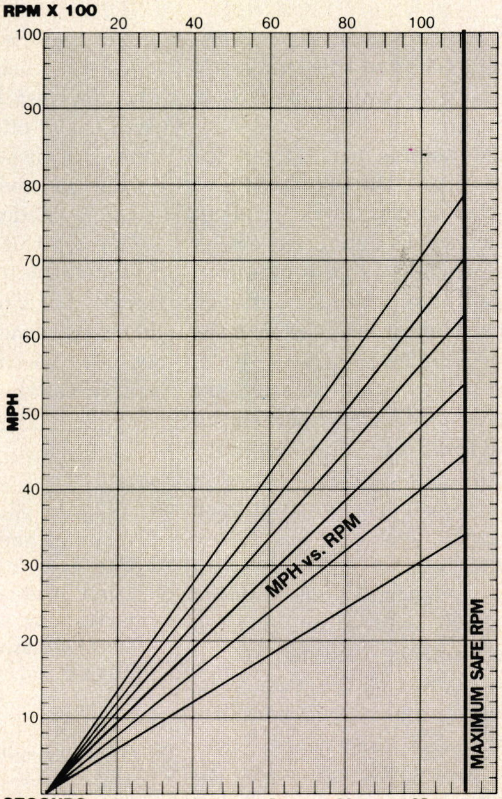
PERFORMANCE

Top speed (observed)	77 mph (124 km/h)

WARRANTY: none

AVAILABLE COLOR: red only





All weight and measurements are taken with machine unladen and fuel tank empty.

mō'tor•cy'cles

We don't expect you to buy our magazine because it has tips on gourmet dining. Nor because it tells you about the latest in jogging shoes. We expect you to like CYCLE GUIDE because it's the best-written, most thorough, most entertaining dose of high-intensity moto-info you can buy. A kind of monthly one-stop shopping center for all your motorcycle input, from new-model tests to inside tips, secrets of the sport, new ways to have fun with your bike and evaluations of the accessories made to help you have that fun.

Street & Dirt

Naturally, we don't confine our interest to one kind of motorcycling. For instance, we think there's nothing in all the world more fun than doing cross-ups with the spectacular MX machinery available today. Not to mention dodging trees and rocks in enduros. In fact, if it's something you can do with a motorcycle off-road, we're sure to do it.

Which doesn't mean, of course, that we don't work the other side of the trees. Whenever we can, we turn our lively and exhaustive street tests into staff rides, blitzing the twisties and eating up thousands of miles in touring. Because we love street motorcycles as much as dirt bikes.

Just like you.

Big & Small

Some people seem to think you can't have fun on anything that doesn't have a handful of cylinders and eyeball-squashing power. And some people think that God meant Man only to ride bikes with seven-speed gearboxes and a tea-cup-full of engine. We're not like either group. We can have fun testing and writing about anything with two wheels and a motor, from crypto-chopper to minibike. So our entire staff is totally conversant with the whole motorcycle spectrum, from tiddler to terror. And consequently, whatever your preferences in displacement and power, you'll find them within the pages of CYCLE GUIDE.

Because fun isn't measured in cubic inches.

Riding & Writing

Ours is a staff of expert riders. Qualified to ride or race almost anything. But it's not our ability to turn hot laps that makes us proud of our work. It's our ability to turn hot licks on the typewriter.

That's because while there are a lot of good riders around, there aren't many who can turn the experience of riding into something others can share and delight in. Or learn from. So we've been very selective about who writes for us, making sure that riding skill is matched by writing skill. The result isn't Shakespeare, but we think our ways of taking you along with us over the jumps, across the apexes and through the woods on two wheels are better than anyone's in the business.

Including Shakespeare.

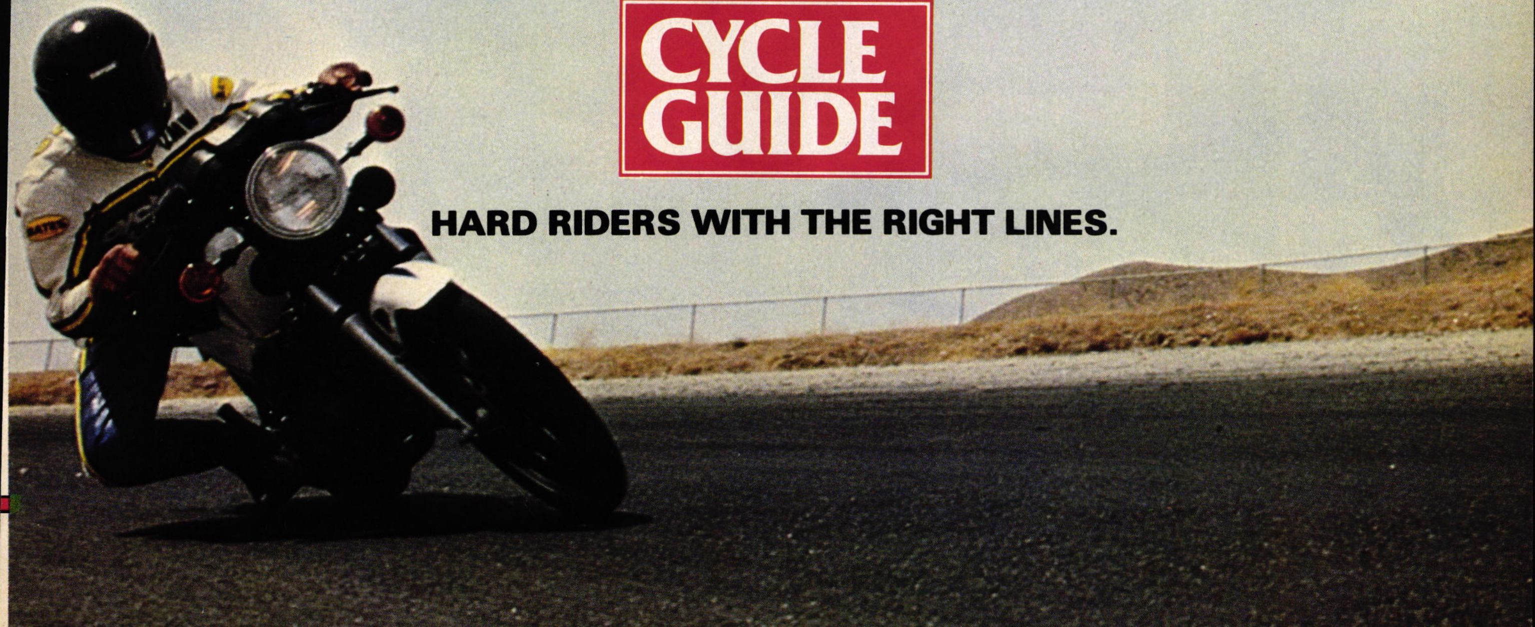
Them & Us

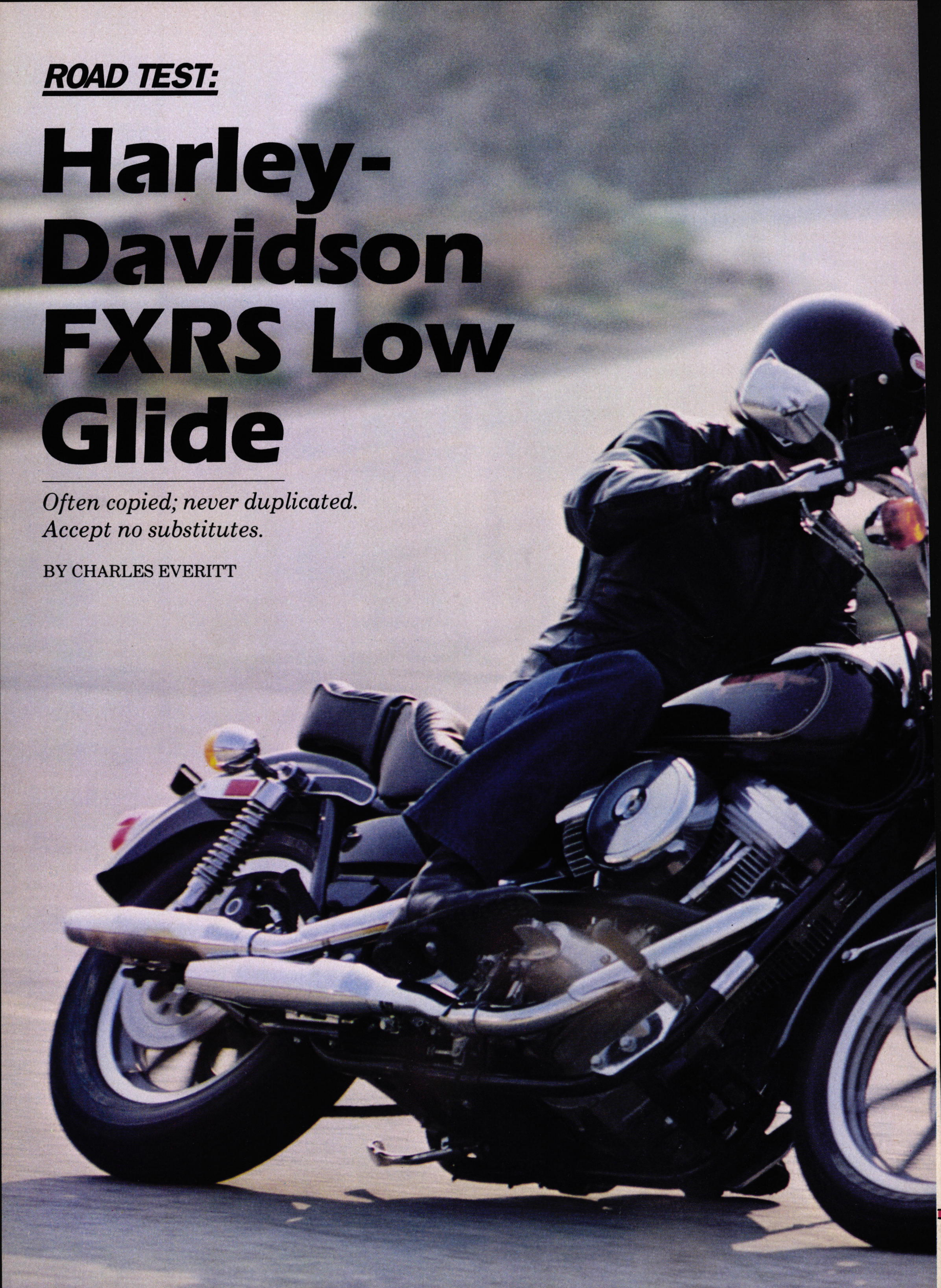
There are a lot of motorcycle magazines on your newsstand. Some specialize in dirt bikes, some in street bikes, others in choppers. Some are very nice to flip through in idle moments. And like you, because we're full-on motorcyclists, we flip through them too, occasionally even finding something we like to read. But like you, we think there's a world of difference between an "occasional" magazine and one that delivers the kind of excitement, enjoyment and insight we'd feel good about spending our money on.

The occasional magazines are still in the rack. You're reading the one that we know delivers the goods every month.

CYCLE GUIDE

HARD RIDERS WITH THE RIGHT LINES.





ROAD TEST:

Harley-Davidson FXRS Low Glide

Often copied; never duplicated. Accept no substitutes.

BY CHARLES EVERITT

Darwin was right. The linchpin to his theory of evolution was that the strong adapted to survive and prosper at the expense of the weak; the process of natural selection, he called it. And museums are full of relics from the past, extinct species stuffed and preserved for all the world to see that they either weren't strong enough or couldn't adapt to changing conditions.

Ask anyone at Harley-Davidson about Darwinism, and they're liable to look at you as if you had a pointy head. But while the people at H-D might not know the name of the song, they surely know the tune. It might be overstating the case to say that Harley-Davidson was facing extinction, but the firm obviously felt threatened enough by the flood of custom-styled motorcycles from Japan to pursue a complaint with the International Trade Commission, thus getting substantially higher tariffs placed on *all* imported plus-700cc motorcycles. Such tariffs, H-D brass claimed, would give Harley time to modernize its facilities, and to get new, improved products on the market. Time to adapt, in other words.

But there was a fundamental catch to adapting, Harley-style. Those new products would have to appeal to new buyers, riders concerned with contemporary standards of comfort, vibration and handling, but without driving off traditional Harley-Davidson customers, to whom the look, sound and feel of an H-D matter more than mere contemporary virtues.

Well, both camps can rest easy, because the FXRS Low Glide should appeal to H-D newcomers and loyalists alike. For '84, the FXRS has Harley's revamped big-twin motor, the V^2 Evolution engine, as well as lowered suspension for a shorter seat-height than on the '83 version. As a matter of fact, the FXRS is the only custom in Harley's '84 lineup that has all of the evolutionary changes, like the V^2 motor, computer-designed frame and new, single-disc front brake. Yet the bike retains its H-D identity; there's no mistaking this motorcycle for some Japanese cruiser lookalike.

First off, there's that engine; a monster 80-cubic-inch, 45 degree vee-twin motor that's been reworked for a claimed 10 percent increase in peak power and 15 percent more peak torque. And if you doubt those figures, riding the FXRS will make a believer out of you in short order. The engine starts easily when cold, and requires only a short warm-up period before the rider can experience the big twin's seductive appeal. That appeal can be summed up in one word: torque—vee-twin barrelsful of torque. Riding the FXRS provides a quick course in short-shifting, because with a claimed torque peak of 84 lb.ft. at 3600 rpm, there's simply no need to wind the engine to its 5400-rpm redline; besides, if you do run the revs to redline, you'll find out the power shuts off abruptly at that engine speed. Instead, it's far better that you shift early and let the motor loaf along, making use of its strong low-end and midrange power.

Not surprisingly, the FXRS's style and quality of power delivery admirably suit the bike to its role as a boulevardier. The broad powerband and accurate carburetion make low-speed cruising a relaxing and almost effortless proposition. And the FXRS can move out smartly, too, when called upon to do so, but not with wheel-spinning, tire-shredding theatrics. Instead, the bike simply accelerates with arm-stretching authority any time you twist the throttle, accompanied by a full-throated booming roar sounding off through the staggered-dual exhausts. Quarter-mile times show the big twin's acceleration isn't on par with that of most large-displacement Japanese multis, but that's not Harley's game; wide-band, usable power is.

In terms of vibration control, though, the FXRS can compete with almost any Japanese motorcycle made. Like the original FXRS introduced in 1982, the '84 model uses three rubber mounts to secure the engine in the frame, and two Heim-jointed turnbuckles confine the engine's movement to fore-and-aft and up-and-down planes. And the system flat *works.* Oh, you can feel some shaking through the grips, footpegs and saddle between 1500 and 2000 rpm, and again from 3000 rpm to redline, but it's a low-frequency/high-amplitude vibration, not the buzziness radiated by some four-cylinder engines. As a result, most riders won't find the FXRS's quaking objectionable. And at 55 mph in top gear, the FXRS is as smooth as any motorcycle around, astonishingly so for a big vee-twin.

So there was no need to update the FXRS's vibration-control package. But the engine itself was a different story. The Shovelhead vee-twin had been around for more than a decade without substantial alteration, while engine technology progressed and left it behind. The time had come to adapt the 80-cubic-incher to more modern specifications. Consequently, Harley redesigned the entire top end and dubbed the result, fittingly enough, the V^2 Evolutionary engine.

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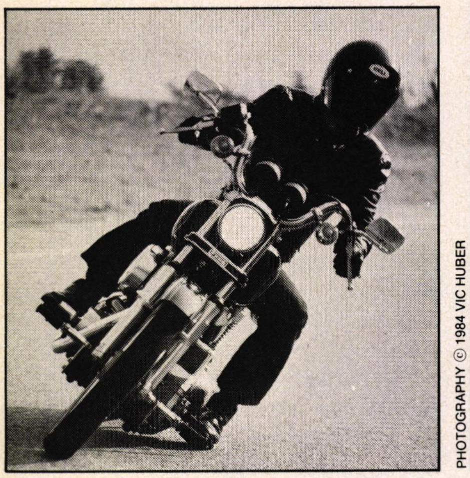
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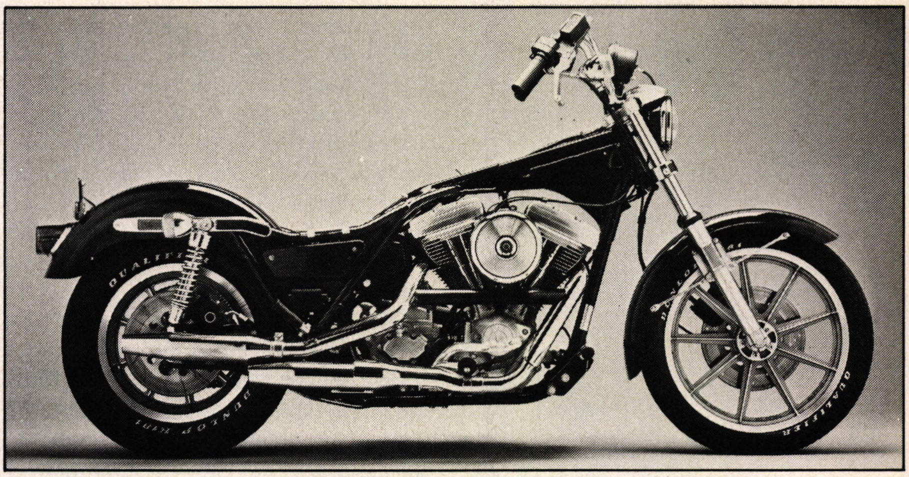
Lowered chassis results in early grounding

But until then, the FXRS handles well.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Shortening the suspension reduced FXRS's wheelbase and trail and steepened the rake

Side effects of getting a lower seat-height.

Indeed, the V² engine's 58 degree included valve angle, flat-top pistons and Side Squish Combustion Chamber honor modern development trends and help bring the big twin up to date. The '84 motor's shallow combustion chambers allow a quick, clean burn of the air/fuel charge, which in turn permits using a higher compression ratio (8.8:1 versus 7.4:1). The newly designed combustion chambers also offer less surface area through which heat, and thus power, can be lost. By comparison, the Shovelhead's 78 degree valve angle, deep combustion chambers and domed pistons are relics from another time.

Conversely, the port and valve sizes in the V² engine seem to flout progress by being *smaller* than those in the old vee-twin. Bigger isn't always better, though, at least not for Harley-Davidson's purposes. Reducing the port and valve sizes achieved higher intake-tract velocities and better cylinder-filling, which results in more torque at low rpm than with a large port/valve combination. And while that's certainly not a revolutionary tuning tactic, Harley's success with it in flattrack racing prompted its use on the V² motor.

Opening those smaller valves is a new, computer-designed cam, with shorter-duration timing for both intake and exhaust. And while the new cam has less overlap, it provides more valve lift than before. In addition, the V² engine's cam timing is the same for both cylinders, whereas the Shovelhead's cam timing is skewed to help offset the fuel-mixture imbalance that results when a single carburetor has to feed the unevenly spaced intake pulses of a vee-twin engine. The V² motor, however, was designed to move the resonant frequency of the intake tract out of the engine's normal rev-range.

The cam works through new hydraulic lifters that have larger-diameter rollers than their Shovelhead counterparts, and new, one-piece hollow pushrods. Oil now passes from the lifters, through the pushrods and to the rocker assemblies, instead of through the leakage-prone external oil lines on previous models. To get back to the bottom end, oil now drains through the pushrod tubes, as well as through a series of holes around the tappet blocks and through another hole at the low (exhaust side) of the heads.

Harley also took serviceability into account when it redesigned the big twin's top end. For instance, despite the engine's tight fit in the frame, the three-piece sandwiched rocker-box assembly can be removed without pulling the motor. Likewise, the new die-cast aluminum cylinders with cast-in iron liners, which replace the Shovelhead's all-iron barrels, can be removed easily even though they are secured with through-studs instead of the old base-stud arrangement. And in those bores slide cast-aluminum pistons, now made by Mahle, a German piston manufacturer. The pistons' complex shape, which Harley describes as "conical-oval," lets them expand more evenly than the Shovelhead's pistons, allowing tighter tolerances for longer piston life.

By comparison, the bottom end of the motor was virtually untouched. The connecting rods have been strengthened and the compensator cush-drive on the end of the crankshaft uses a different spring, but almost everything else is standard Shovelhead-issue, including the dry, multi-plate clutch, the primary-drive and gear ratios, and the shifting action. The shift lever has a short throw, but the action is notchy, especially on the third-to-fourth upshift, and neutral can be found only after downshifting to first.

With the V² engine, then, H-D has managed to bring the motor further along the evolutionary scale without forfeiting things that make a Harley desirable, such as the look, sound and torquey feel. The engine also illustrates how a cruiserbike's evolutionary path differs from other motorcycles'. High horsepower figures, for instance, aren't useful if they come at the expense of low-rpm torque and tractability for easy cruising.

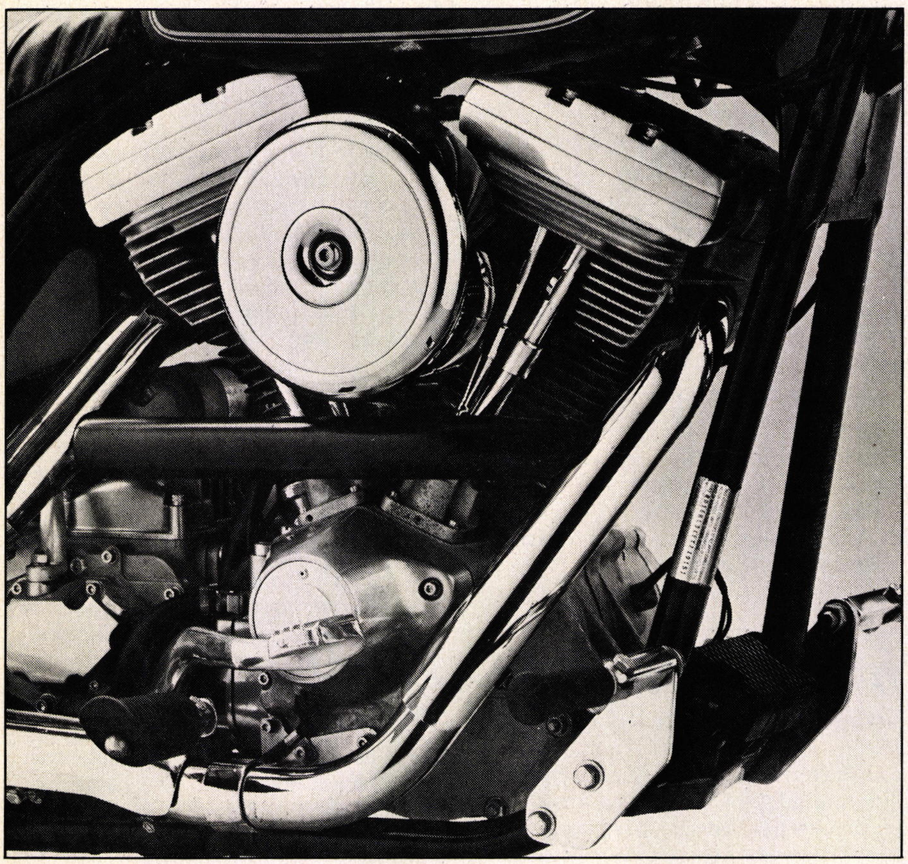
That same evolutionary criterion also is true for a custom's chassis development, where real progress is measured by things like lower seat-heights. And Harley took that particular concern to heart, because surveys showed that a low, *low* seat-height was what customers wanted. But Harley didn't alter the frame to get that lowered seat. The designers had configured the original FXRS's frame back in '82 specifically for the soon-to-come Evolution engine, and they were loathe to change it again so soon. Instead, a 2-inch-shorter, FXE-style fork was fitted, as were ¾-inch-shorter shocks. And to compensate for the loss in suspension length, Harley used stiffer springs and less preload in the fork, and upped the spring rate at the rear, too. Fork travel is about the same as on the '83 FXRS, but rear wheel travel is shorter.

Not only is the FXRS's saddle low to the ground, but it's softly padded, too, and helps place the rider in just the right position for boulevard profiling. Adding to the effect is a rubber-mounted buckhorn handlebar, a suitably forward-mounted set of footpegs and a pair of highway pegs. The pieces contribute to a riding position that's fine for short trips, but on longer journeys causes a slight amount of lower-back pain. The saddle limits all-day riding comfort, too, because its shape doesn't leave much option for moving forward or backward. Fortunately, the rider can use the two forward sets of pegs and even the passenger pegs to stretch his legs and move around.

Along with both the shorter suspension and lower seat-height, however, comes reduced ride quality. The stiffer spring rates at both ends undermine the suspension's ability to soak up road surface irregularities, especially at the rear. The front suspension is fairly compliant over most surfaces, even though the rider's weight alone uses up almost half of the fork's travel, but the oversprung/underdamped shocks transfer nearly every bump straight to the rider's backside, even with the springs' preload set at the lowest of their five positions. Nor do the shocks' stiffer springs keep the back end from bottoming over severe jolts.

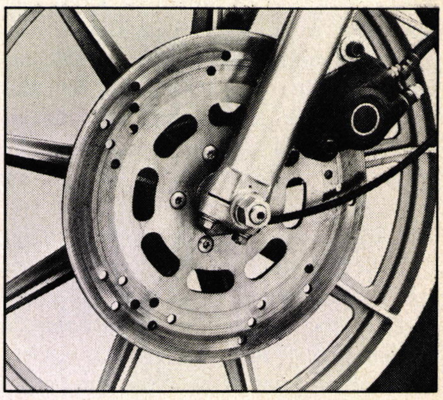
The shortened suspension also affects the bike's steering geometry, but positively rather than negatively. By having been lowered 1¼-inch more in front than in back, the FXRS now has less steering-head angle, less trail and a shorter wheelbase than before, all of which add up to slightly quicker steering. That's not to imply the motorcycle is twitchy or darty; it's not. But the revised steering geometry teams up with the leverage offered by the buckhorn handlebar and the bike's low center of gravity to make the FXRS extremely nimble for such a large motorcycle. Consequently, a rider can thread through an urban obstacle course with ease and confidence. The FXRS does have a slight tendency to stand up in low-to-moderate-speed corners, though, and requires the rider to maintain opposite-lock pressure on the handlebar to keep the bike on-line.

At higher speeds, the FXRS retains its traditional Harley stability without feeling heavy or clumsy. In fact, the bike can be quite a competent backroad partner as long as you respect its limited banking angle. That's right, the lowered suspension also robbed the FXRS of cornering clearance. And that's a shame, because otherwise the bike handles exceptionally well for its size. As it is, even moderately hard charging will find you grinding the header-pipe clamp, and exhaust-pipe



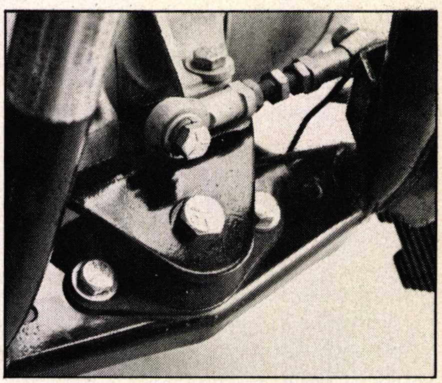
V² engine has new pistons, aluminum cylinders and shallow combustion chambers

Bringing the aging Shovelhead motor further along the evolutionary trail.



Single-disc brake replaces dual-disc setup

Fewer pieces for easier stopping.



© 1984 DAVID DEWHURST

One of FXRS's three rubber mounts

To calm the Milwaukee thunder.

COMPARATIVE TEST DATA:

Make and Model	Quarter-Mile, sec/mph	Top Speed, mph	Weight, lbs.	Stopping Distance From 60 mph, ft.
Harley-Davidson FXRS-'84	13.917/94.57	112	575	140
Harley-Davidson XLS Roadster-'83	13.842/93.94	106	515	138
Honda Nighthawk 650-'83	12.287/108.04	122	451	127
Yamaha XV920 Virago-'83	12.835/101.46	108	503	138
Honda VT750C Shadow-'83	12.906/100.78	127	484	132
Harley-Davidson FXRS-'82	13.917/93.07	109†	594	124

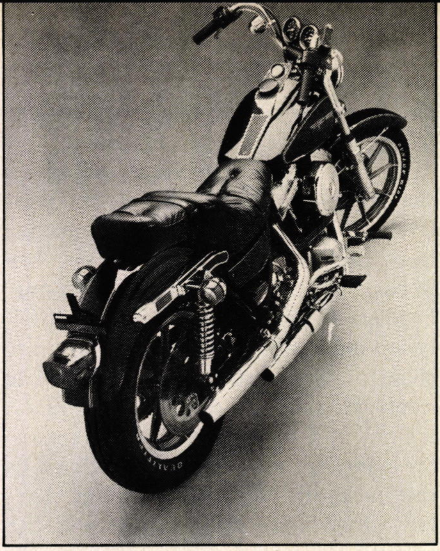
†indicates a calculated top speed

Continued

shield and bracket on the right, and the footpeg bracket and primary cover on the left. Harley spokesmen say it is possible, though, to retrofit 1983 FXRS suspension components, which should net not only more cornering clearance, but better ride quality, as well.

If the lowered suspension seems like a technological step backward, the FXRS's new front brake system is a step forward. H-D left the rear brake unchanged, but replaced the '83's front dual-disc setup with a larger-diameter, single-disc unit. Plus, Harley fitted a more rigid caliper and juggled the piston sizes of both the caliper and master cylinder for a claimed 30 percent reduction in lever effort at lock-up. But even with the changes, the FXRS still takes a full-fisted squeeze at the lever to haul the bike down from speed. Nonetheless, the single-disc arrangement provides a firm lever-feel and good feedback, and is a big improvement over past H-D brakes. In contrast, the single-disc rear brake takes little effort, while offering better-than-average feel and adequate warning before locking up.

Which should make it obvious that while change might be slow in coming at H-D, it does come—and usually for the better. Such progress is vital, too, because it's a fair bet that the company's future depends on bikes *like* the FXRS; motorcycles that embody contemporary virtues, yet don't tread on H-D's most marketable quality—tradition. In a bizarre way, Harley is a captive of its own market, but with the FXRS, the company has a motorcycle that can both attract the holdouts and keep the devotees. Because the FXRS is more than just a good Harley; it's a good *motorcycle,* too, a competent example of the cruiser genre that offers modern levels of performance while retaining a unique character that can't be copied. With motorcycles like the FXRS, Harley should survive and prosper—and prove that Darwin was right. ●



Nits

1. Turnsignal switches awkward to use.
2. No fork lock.
3. No toolkit.
4. No centerstand.
5. Oil seeps from engine.

Picks

1. Service accessibility—top end can be removed without pulling the engine; easily reached spin-on oil filter.
2. Friction throttle-stop cruise-control.
3. Accurate speedometer.
4. Battery is low-maintenance type.

Ride Review

• The FXRS will be the cause of much culinary research—an awful lot of guys will be poring through cookbooks to find what kind of sauce goes with crow. If these guys still want to bad-mouth Harleys, they'll have to dream up a whole new litany of put-downs. Their old standards just won't work anymore.

A jackhammer ride from a machine that sheds its parts as quickly as the mileposts go by? Try again. Or how about the drip-pan as standard equipment? Not even close, because this bike's new engine is nearly as oil-tight as anything from the Orient.

So maybe, with their pat arguments no longer able to hold water, some guys finally will throw a leg over a Harley. "Try it, you'll like it" never had more meaning. And eating a little crow isn't so bad—once you get past the feathers.

—Joe Kress

• Suddenly, I realized some annoying static was gone. That omnipresent sniggering about Harley-Davidson—whether H-D is in the motorcycle or the lifestyle business; whether you can do more with a Harley than cruise downtown, affecting a Brandoish sneer and staring down everything from behind your Ray-Bans—has simply stopped.

In fact, that line of conversation is dead, laid to rest by Evolution Engine Harleys like this FXRS. I'm not telling you that if you dislike the RS, improved as it is, you don't know motorcycles. Even in its refined state, this bike still is very much a Harley-D, and some riders wouldn't be caught dead on one. But if you *were* on the fence about Harleys—or even close—grab onto something well-anchored. Otherwise, this radically better FXRS could easily draw you in like a moto-magnet. *—Larry Works*

• What can you say about a motorcycle that vibrates at idle like a jackhammer, has all the cornering clearance of a bicycle with training wheels and has a set of controls that challenge the dexterity of the human hand? Well, in the case of the 1984 Harley-Davidson FXRS, you can only say one thing: It's wonderful. Somehow, Harley has managed to improve nearly every aspect of its 80-cubic-inch vee-twin, without losing any of its traditional Harley-ness. The rumbling exhaust, the low-end torque, the laid-back seating position and that unmistakable Harley look are all there in spades. But in every way, this is a vastly improved motorcycle. The V2 engine smoothes out above idle, it's relatively oil-tight, and it has none of the Shovelhead's mechanical noise. There's no doubt the FXRS is still a cruiser, but now it's the best damned cruiser ever built. *—Jim Miller*

Charting The Changes

Engine: All-new from the base gaskets up (see test). Connecting rods are reinforced for a claimed tenfold increase in strength. Fifty-one-tooth rear-wheel sprocket replaces 48-tooth sprocket for numerically higher final-drive ratio. FXRS also now has V-Fire III two-stage, vacuum-controlled ignition, similar to that used on Sportster engines. The V-Fire III also uses a rev-limiter that keeps the engine from exceeding 5800 rpm. The compensator cush-drive on the left end of the crankshaft uses a Belleville spring rather than a coil spring.

Suspension: To lower the bike, the fork's stanchion tubes are 2 inches shorter and the shocks are ¾-inch shorter; travel remains the same for the fork, but rear-wheel travel is decreased slightly. Front spring-rate increased by 26 percent, but with less preload; both compression and rebound damping increased. Rear spring-rate increased 20 percent, with more preload, because of reduced wheel-travel; damping rates unchanged. Shortened suspension units reduced steering-head angle and trail figures from 31 degrees and 4.82 inches for the previous FXRS to 29 degrees and 4.22 inches on the '84 model. Wheelbase is also slightly shorter than the '83 model's, again due to shortened suspension.

Brakes: Previous FXRS's dual-disc front brakes now replaced by a single-disc setup, resulting in a claimed 6-pound weight loss. Disc-diameter increased from 10 inches to 11.5 inches. Larger disc combines with a larger-diameter caliper piston, a smaller-diameter master-cylinder piston and a more rigid caliper for a claimed 30 percent reduction in lever effort. Rear caliper and disc unchanged.

Details: Instruments have been redesigned. Passenger pillion no longer has a padded backrest.

CYCLE GUIDE SPECIFICATIONS

Harley-Davidson FXRS Low Glide

street

MANUFACTURER: Harley-Davidson Motor Company Inc., 3700 West Juneau Avenue, Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53201

SUGGESTED RETAIL PRICE: $7460 for solid colors;
$7560 for two-tone

ENGINE

Type	four-stroke 45-degree tandem vee-twin
Valve arrangement	pushrod-operated overhead valves
Bore and stroke	88.8mm x 108.0mm
Displacement	1337.7cc
Compression ratio	8.8:1
Engine redline	5400 rpm
Carburetion	one 38mm Keihin butterfly-type with accelerator pump
Air filter	washable oiled foam element
Lubrication	dry sump
Starting system	electric only
Ignition	transistorized breakerless
Charging system	12-volt; 264-watt alternator, voltage regulator/rectifier, 19-ampere-hour battery

DRIVETRAIN

Primary drive	double-row chain; 1.542:1 ratio
Clutch	dry, multi-plate
Final drive	#530 chain (5/8-in. pitch, 3/8-in. width); 2.318:1 (51/22) ratio

Gear	Internal gear ratio	Overall gear ratio	MPH per 1000 RPM
I	3.241	11.585	6.38
II	2.210	7.900	9.36
III	1.603	5.730	12.91
IV	1.233	4.408	16.78
V	1.000	3.575	20.69

SUSPENSION/WHEEL TRAVEL

Front	Showa, 35mm stanchion tube diameter/6.0 in. (153mm)
Rear	dual Showa shocks, 5-position adjustable spring preload/3.1 in. (79mm)

BRAKES

Front	single-action hydraulic caliper, 11.2-in. (284mm) effective disc diameter
Rear	single-action hydraulic caliper, 11.3-in. (286mm) effective disc diameter

TIRES

Front	MJ90-19 Dunlop K181 Qualifier tubeless
Rear	MT90-16 Dunlop K181 Qualifier tubeless

DIMENSIONS AND CAPACITIES

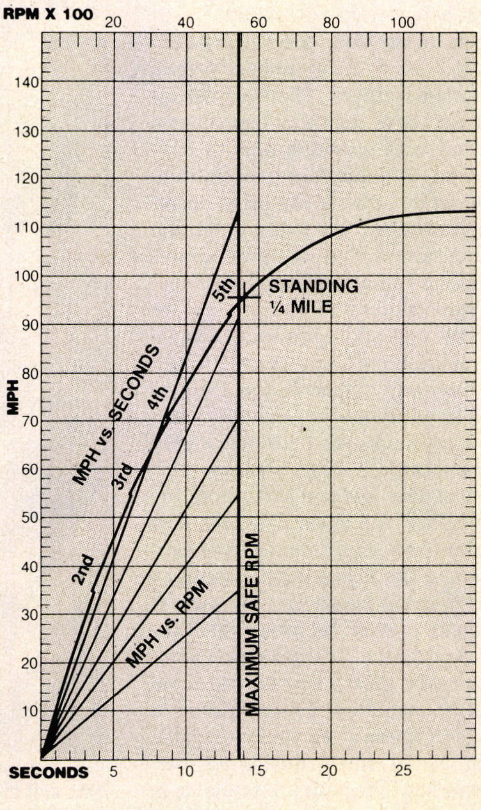
Weight	575 lbs. (260.8kg)
Weight distribution	45.7 % front, 54.3 % rear
Gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR)	1085 lbs. (492kg)
Load capacity (with full fuel tank)	484 lbs. (220kg)
Wheelbase	62.6 in. to 64.1 in. (1590 to 1627mm)
Seat height	28.5 in. (723mm)
Handlebar width	27.2 in. (690mm)
Footpeg height	10.9 in. (278mm)
Ground clearance	4.8 in. (121mm), at sidestand
Steering head angle	29.0 degrees from vertical
Front wheel trail	4.22 in. (107mm)
Frame	tubular, stamped and square-section mild steel, double front downtubes
Oil capacity	3.5 qt. (3.1*l*)
Fuel tank	steel, 4.2 gal. (16.0*l*), including 0.7 gal. (2.5*l*) reserve
Instrumentation	speedometer, odometer, tripmeter resettable to zero, tachometer, fuel gauge

PERFORMANCE

Fuel consumption range	38 to 48 mpg (16 to 20 km/*l*)
Average fuel consumption	44 mpg (19 km/*l*)
Cruising range, maximum	160 to 202 miles (257 to 325km)
Cruising range, reserve only	27 to 34 miles (43 to 55km)
Speedometer error, 30 mph indicated	30 mph actual
Speedometer error, 55 mph indicated	55 mph actual
Best 1/4-mile acceleration	13.917 sec., 94.57 mph (152 km/h)
Top speed (observed)	112 mph (180 km/h)
Stopping distance from 30 mph	33 ft. (10.1m)
Stopping distance from 60 mph	140 ft. (42.7m)

WARRANTY: 12 months, unlimited mileage

AVAILABLE COLORS: black; candy red; candy-purple-and-silver



All weights and measurements are taken with machine unladen and fuel tank empty.

PRODUCT EVALUATION:

Dainese Gone Leathers

European haute couture for off-the-rack leathers.

• European motorcyclists do things differently from their American counterparts. Continental riders have the luxury of the autobahn and autostrada, big, fast freeways without enforced speed limits. Europeans also seem to take their riding more seriously, too, than Americans, even to the point of wearing full roadracing leathers on the street. And, quite often, those leathers are from Dainese, an Italian firm, imported in America by Motorace, P.O. Box 861, Wilbraham, Massachusetts 01095.

Part of Dainese leathers' appeal is that they're worn by roadracers like Freddie Spencer, Kenny Roberts and Franco Uncini, and the Europeans identify closely with such roadracing heroes. Another reason is that what Dainese *sells* isn't custom-made. It's off-the-rack racing fashion; roadracing leathers for everyman, so to speak.

A prime example of Dainese's Euro-style leathers is the Gone one-piece cowhide suit. The Gone comes in one color combination: black body, with red shoulders and arms and a white collar. A 1⅜-inch-wide strip of Cordura-like material with the Dainese name on it covers the seam between the two colors.

For the most part, the Gone's construction doesn't differ radically from that of other leathers. There's a double layer of leather at the shoulders, elbows, knees, seat, and from the hips to mid-thigh, and those areas are double-stitched, while most of the other seams are single-stitched. At the elbows and knees, the second layer of leather covers a polyester-foam padding. Narrow-gauge zippers over a leather flap are used at the legs and cuffs, with a snap-closure at each cuff, and there's a full-length, two-way zipper in the front of the suit. In addition, the Gone has a zippered breast pocket and a Velcro-closed interior pocket in the nylon lining.

Many of the Dainese's features are standard fare for most leathers, but where the Gone suit departs from convention is in the knees. First, there's an elasticized-nylon insert in the back of each knee to prevent bunching-up of the leather. And on the outside of each knee, above the shin, there's a plastic skid-pad with 22, ½-inch-long studs designed to protect your knees when you're dragging them on the pavement during full-berserk cornering. The pads are available in black, white and semi-clear; one pair of each comes with the Gone suit. Replacements are available for $3.95 a pair from Motorace.

And the skid pads work. The plastic nubbins slide fairly easily across the pavement and don't dig in, and the plastic keeps the heat of friction from being transferred to your leg. They also keep the leather from getting scuffed during knee-out antics, but the studs do wear away rather quickly.

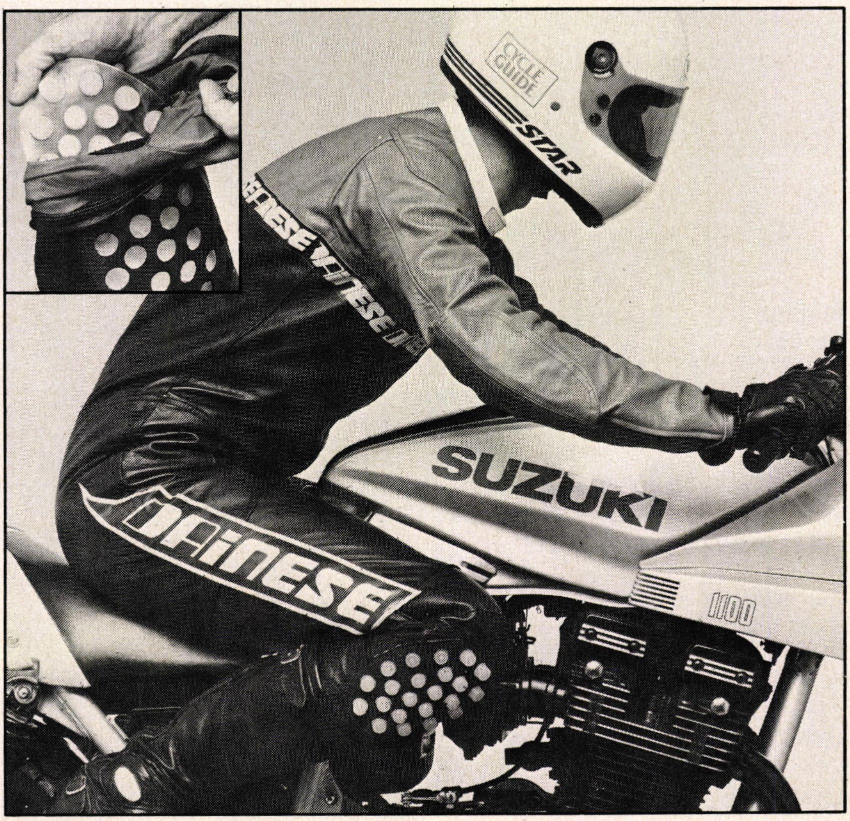
If the knee-skids suggest these leathers are for racing or sporting riding, then the cut of the garment confirms it. Dainese leathers come in five sizes, based on the rider's weight, height and waist size. My suit fit my 5-foot-10, 150-pound frame snugly for a crouched riding position, but not so tightly that I couldn't move around on a bike. The knee pads and elastic inserts made the legs fit a bit too snug, though, and while that didn't inhibit knees-out cornering, I felt like I was having to stretch the leathers a bit to do so.

The Gone's racing/sporting purpose is reaffirmed when you get off the bike. The suit doesn't have an action back and the arms are placed forward on the torso to accommodate a leaned-forward position. The back of the Gone also is cut for a crouching position, so that when you stand up straight you're pulling against the front of the garment, and the leather bags a bit in the upper back.

That's a minor inconvenience, though, compared to the Gone's greatest shortcoming. The leather and full nylon lining don't breathe well, and there are no vents in the suit. Consequently, the rider is well-insulated, which can be a comfort in chilly weather but sheer misery on a hot summer day.

The Dainese's other limitation is its cost: $425 is the suggested retail price for the Gone suit. That's a pretty penny for off-the-rack leathers when you can get a heavier, custom-made suit with many of the same features from American leather makers for $320-to-$450.

But those are *American* leathers; they don't have Dainese's European flair or the distinction of being the brand that several world champions wear. And American suits don't have Dainese's ultra-trick-looking knee-skids. So, if the Euro-look appeals to you, you can order Dainese's Gone suit through your motorcycle dealer or directly from Motorace. *—Charles Everitt*



PHOTOGRAPHY © 1984 VIC HUBER

Gone suit offers European dash and has double layers of leather at critical points

As well as replaceable curb-feelers for your knees.

SPORT LINES

Cycle Guide's True Tales of Race Courses, Dark Horses and Machi t Speed

EDITED BY DAIN GINGERELLI

Winners & Losers–1983

PHOTOGRAPHY © 1984 TOM RILES

The highest highs and lowest lows of Racing 1983 — and some things in between.

• Race connoisseurs have already labeled 1983 as a vintage year. The season started off, by and large, as a predicted turkey shoot for Honda in practically every form of racing. After all, Honda sent a four-man team to Europe to contest the 500cc roadrace Grands Prix, and had former world champions Graham Noyce and Andre Malherbe on its Open-class motocross squad. And in American racing, more Honda factory and support riders contested Wrangler Super Series races than did riders on any other brand, while Honda's AMA roadrace contingent included both Formula 1 and Superbike teams.

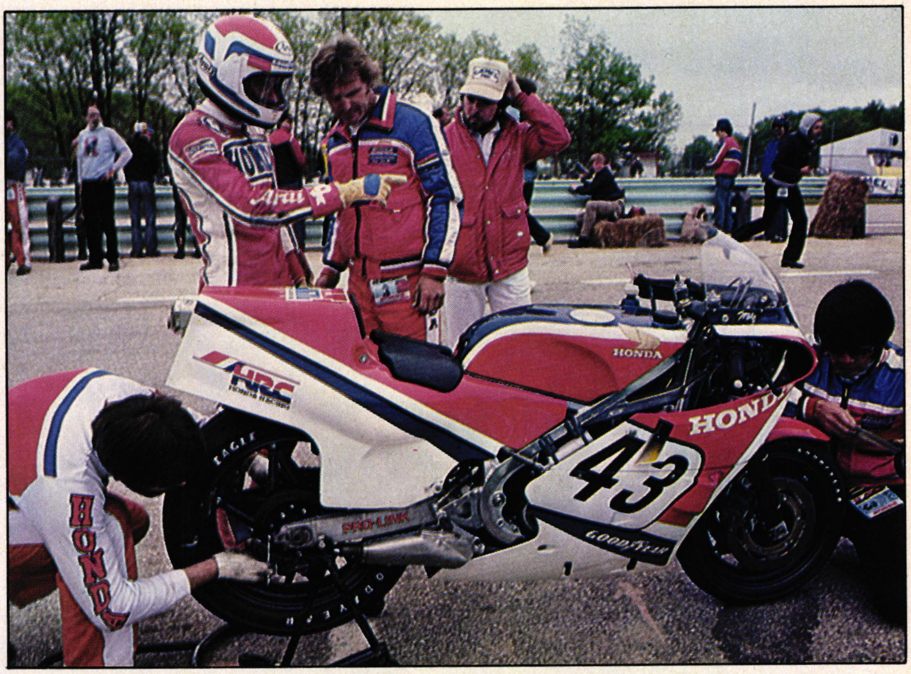
But as the racing season progressed, it became obvious that Big Red's money wasn't going to just *buy* the championships. The human element of racing entered into the picture. Crashes took their toll in AMA roadracing, paving the way for Kawasaki's budgeteer-Superbike team to win its third consecutive title in a late-season charge. And in GP motocross, Hakan Carlqvist gained momentum after his Carlsbad USGP win, and wrapped up the World Championship for Yamaha. Only in AMA's Wrangler Super Series did Honda live up to its pre-season reputation as a shoo-in victor, taking three out of four classes.

And, now, with the racing over, it's time for CYCLE GUIDE'S annual selection of winners and losers. So let's pull the 1983 bottle off the rack, pop the cork, and sample one of racing's vintage years. —*Dain Gingerelli*

Continued

Roadrace Winners:

- Pride of the Yankees—and Japanese: It took several years, but Honda finally shelved its pride—and the NR500 four-stroke—to win the 500cc Manufacturer's and Rider's World Championships with a two-stroke. In the process, Freddie Spencer joined Steve Baker and Kenny Roberts as America's only roadrace world champions.
- Cooling the crashes: Wes Cooley had a rough year. The two-time AMA Superbike champ switched from Yoshimura to Kawasaki for 1983, and crashed in his first race for Kawasaki at Daytona. He recovered from a broken elbow, then crashed again at Mid-Ohio while leading the F1 race on Eddie Lawson's 1982 superbike. But Cooley bounced back one more time to win the Sears Point National on the same bike.
- They said it couldn't be done: Kawasaki rider Wayne Rainey, against all odds, won the first 750cc Superbike series. Who said air-cooled inline-fours are obsolete?
- What really Mathers: While golden boy Rainey received accolades for his riding, team manager Gary Mathers never lost sight of the overall picture. His meticulous, level-headed guidance helped keep the Superbike trophy in Kawasaki's glory cabinet for another year.
- Flick of the wrist: Despite two broken wrists, Mike Baldwin managed to survive the year and retain his Formula 1 title.



A battery of mechanics teamed with Mike Baldwin to win the F1 title

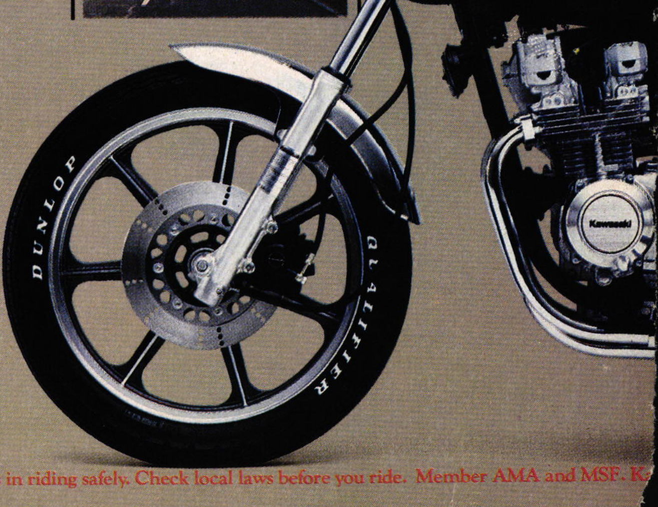
Winning the F1 series was easy; it was Superbike that gave him problems.

- Where champions dare: Even though Roberts and Spencer won every GP race, there was one other man whose efforts placed him at the top of the GP field: Suzuki team rider Randy Mamola. His third-place finish in the points standings was the result of a first-rate effort on second-rate machinery.
- The Big Black Hammer: Harley-Davidson team members nicknamed their

And the world belongs to you. No wonder heads turn. The LTD550 is a pure-bred Kawasaki with unmatched power and style. On an LTD550 you blaze your own trail…with the engine that dominates middleweight production roadracing. The shaft-drive LTD takes 550cc beyond your expectations. The engine performs like a 650. The look

LTD

THE STREETS BELO



Specifications subject to change without notice. Availability may be limited. Kawasaki believes in riding safely. Check local laws before you ride. Member AMA and MSF. K

Suzuki was outclassed in Europe

But Randy Mamola kept them in third.

Bob Hannah stormed his way to the top at the beginning of the Wrangler Super Series

But injuries muddied his comeback bid for 1983.

XR1000-based Battle of the Twins racer Lucifer's Hammer. And when rider Jay Springsteen swung it at Daytona last March, he nailed down his first big-bore AMA roadrace win.

- Bigger is better: Yamaha showed that one way to increase horsepower is also the oldest: increase engine displacement. And for the Daytona 200-miler, there were four 680cc OW69s for riders Kenny Roberts and Eddie Lawson to choose from. Roberts and Lawson finished one-two.
- Randy Who? Randy Renfrow was just another rider in the Formula 2 program at the beginning of the season. But by midyear he

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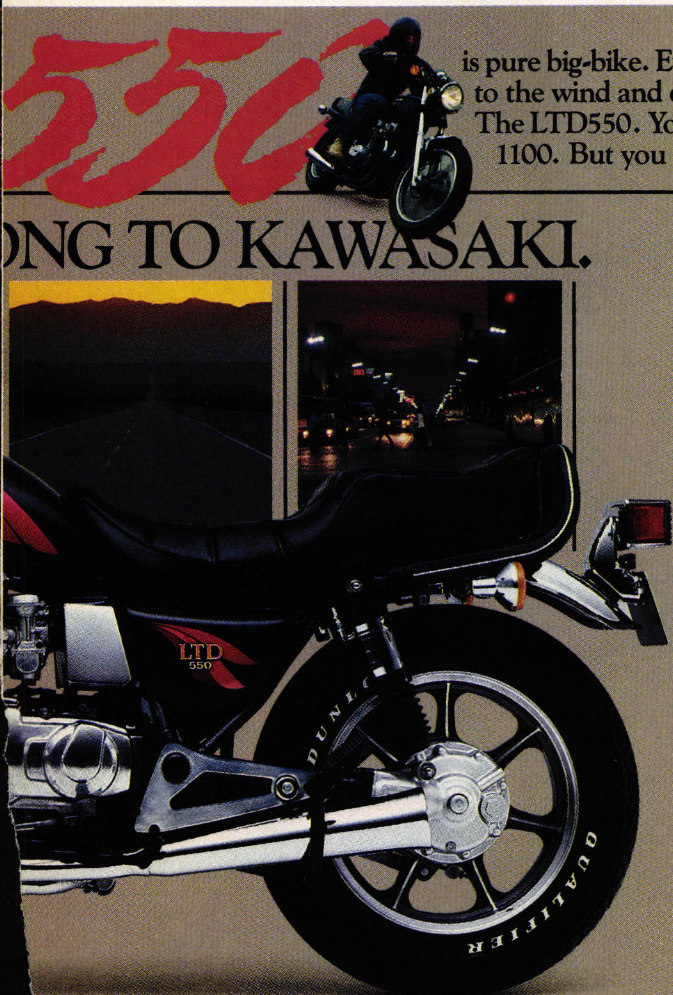

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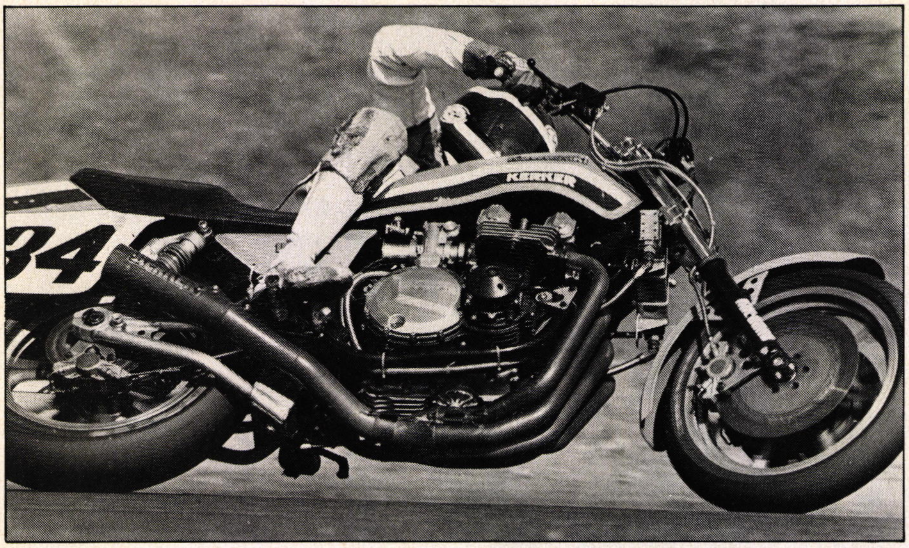

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After some hard riding at Loudon, Wes Cooley found himself sideways

Despite two mid-season crashes, he finally won the Sears Point National.

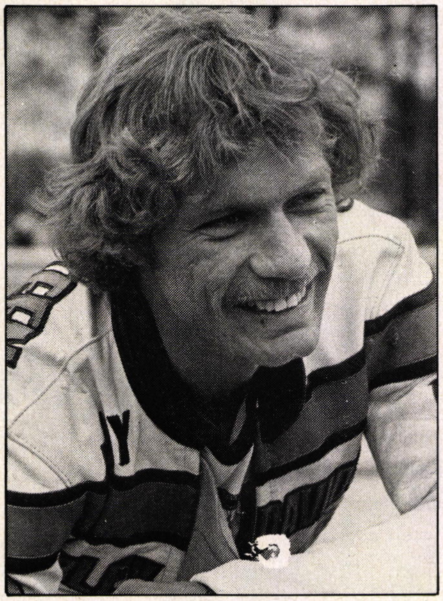
was the rider to beat, and won the F2 championship.

Roadrace Losers:

- Chicken or the egg? Honda's Interceptor re-established the proverbial question of which came first, the streetbike or the racebike. In the Superbike war, however, the Kawasaki came first.
- Carnage knowledge: Team Honda riders Mike Baldwin, Steve Wise and Flyin' Fred Merkel spent a major portion of the season destroying factory equipment, not to mention doing some damage to their own bodywork. Perhaps the high-point came at Seattle when Merkel launched his Interceptor-based Superbike into a trackside pine tree. The impact broke the tree in half, and almost did the same to the bike, too.
- The Daytona Too Boring: The Daytona 200 continues to be one of the dullest roadraces in the world. Please, Mr. France, change the race to a two-heat format, like the Laguna Seca event.

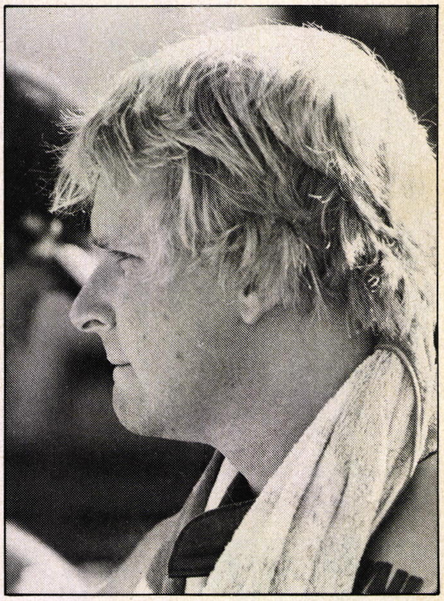
Mike Baldwin after winning F1 title

A year of breaking wrists and records.



Roadracing suited Jay Springsteen

He won the Daytona BOTT for Harley.



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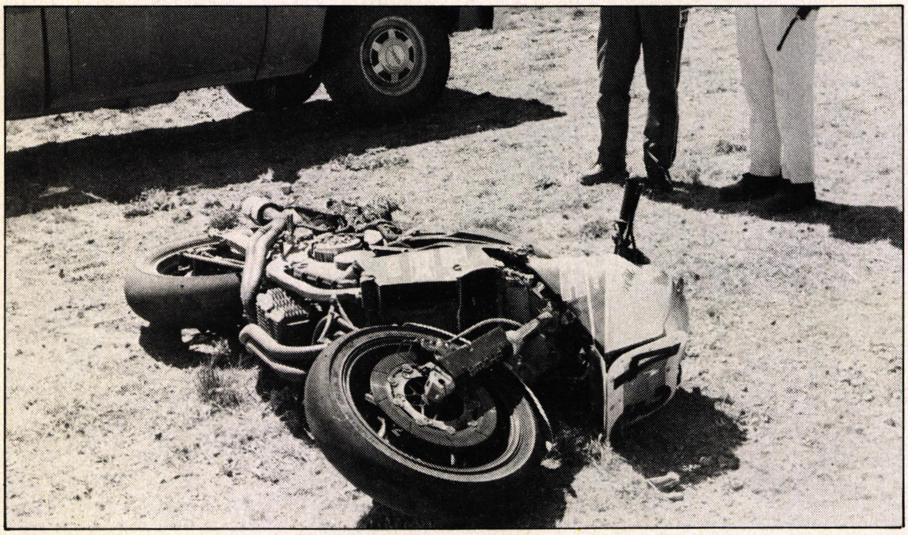
Wayne Rainey concentrated all year

To win the Superbike championship.



Wrecked Hondas littered the tracks during the season

Mike Baldwin's Interceptor after his Willow Springs crash-and-burn.

Motocross Winners:

- Valedictorian: David Bailey listened to much of father Gary's advice and graduated from the Wrangler Super Series at the head of his class.
- Hurricane Hannah: Bob Hannah wasn't blowing hot air at the beginning of the season when he said that he'd be the rider to beat for 1983. Unfortunately, a broken wrist took the wind out of his sails during the summer months.
- They came, they saw, they conquered: The United States Trophee and Motocross des Nations team did it again, sweeping both events for the third year in a row. Special commendations go to: David Bailey, Mark Bennett, Broc Glover and Jeff Ward.
- Go, Johnny O: Johnny O'Mara overcame

Continued

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Johnny O'Mara has long been team Honda's top 125 rider

Now, after winning the National Championship, he's the country's top 125 rider.

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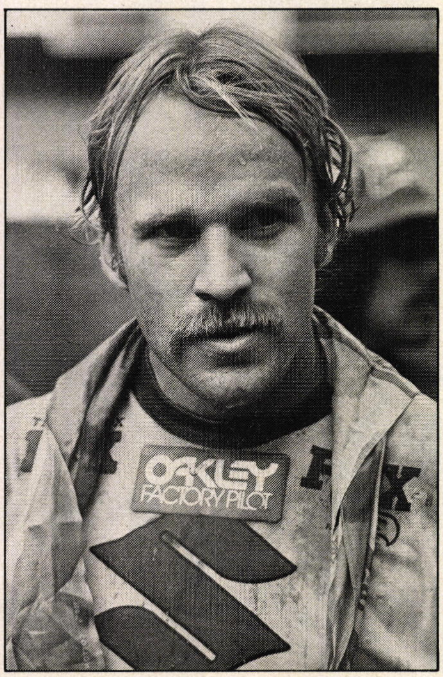
Broc Glover nose-diving at Belgium

Helping America win the des Nations.



In the end, Mark Barnett didn't win

When being fast isn't enough.

the stigma of being No. 2 by winning the 125cc National Championship.

- Big Red: American Honda won all the 125cc, 250cc and Supercross titles of the Wrangler Super Series. Yamaha took the Open-class title.

Motocross Losers:

- Bombs away: Mark Barnett is one of the fastest men in motocross racing, but 1983 wasn't kind to The Bomber, and he fizzled on three accounts: 1) He finished third in the 125cc battle, due to a multitude of mechanical gremlins. 2) David Bailey beat him by several points in Supercross. 3) Worst of all, he lost the Wrangler Super Series title by a single point. Sometimes being the fastest isn't enough.
- Strike out: Suzuki and Kawasaki failed to win AMA motocross championships this year.
- World Neutrality Act: In the Grands Prix, Honda and Kawasaki won no titles.

Flattrack Winners:

- Goss with the win: Randy Goss won only two Camel Pro Series races during 1983—fewer than defending champ Ricky Graham, teammate Jay Springsteen, Bubba Shobert or Jim Filice—yet Goss took home his second AMA Grand National title. In the process, he proved that winning—or at least taking first place—isn't everything.
- So long, Dick O'Brien: Harley-Davidson's race czar, Dick O'Brien, announced his retirement, effective January 1, 1984. OB has been around dirttrack racing for so many years that some fans think he invented dirt. Don't believe it, though; he only made it better.
- Ten on a match: R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Company has been with AMA Class C racing for 10 seasons now, giving new meaning to their old advertising motto "walk a Mile for a Camel."
- Lady's first: Ms. Tammy Jo Kirk broke into flattracking's fraternity by becoming the first woman to start—and score points—in an AMA Grand National race.

Flattrack Losers:

- Close, but no cigar: Despite the persistent craftwork of Jerry Griffith, and some brilliant riding by Hank Scott and Terry Poovey, Honda's flattrack program still hasn't produced consistent winning results.

Miscellaneous Winners:

- More Morans: Brothers Shawn and Kelly Moran proved to be the best Americans at Speedway. Shawn won the World Long Track Final in West Germany, while Kelly came back to America and won the U.S. Speedway Nationals at the Costa Mesa Fairgrounds.
- Indianapolis 200: Elmer Trett ventured into motorcycle dragracing's new frontier

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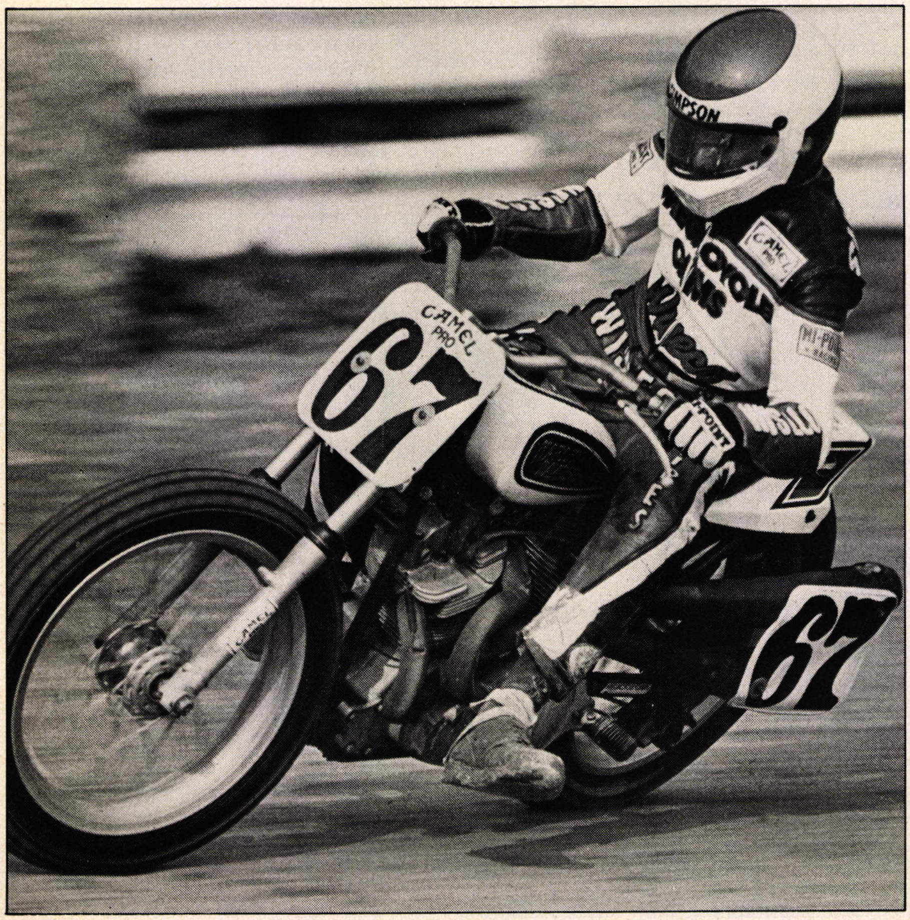
Randy Goss powered his way to a second AMA Grand National Championship

It made a good going-away present for team-boss Dick O'Brien(inset).



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Sometimes winning isn't the only thing—Bubba Shobert won three races

It was one more than Randy Goss had, but Shobert didn't win the No. 1 plate.

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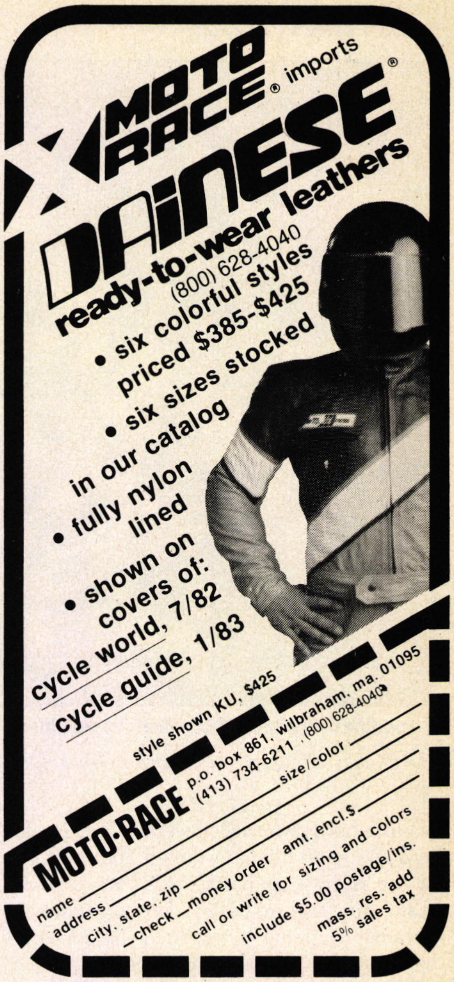
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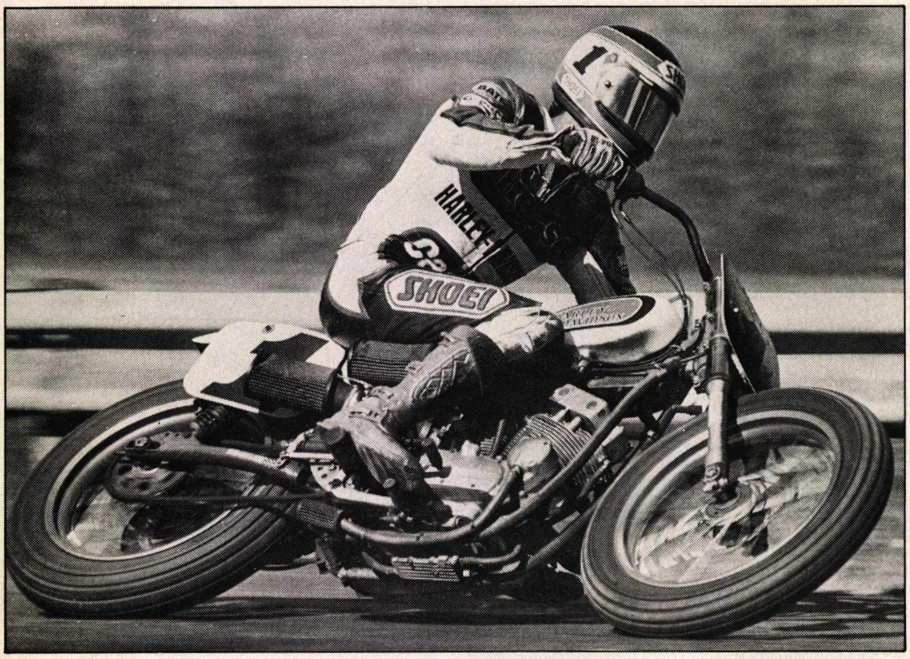


Defending CPS champ Ricky Graham won three straight at end of season

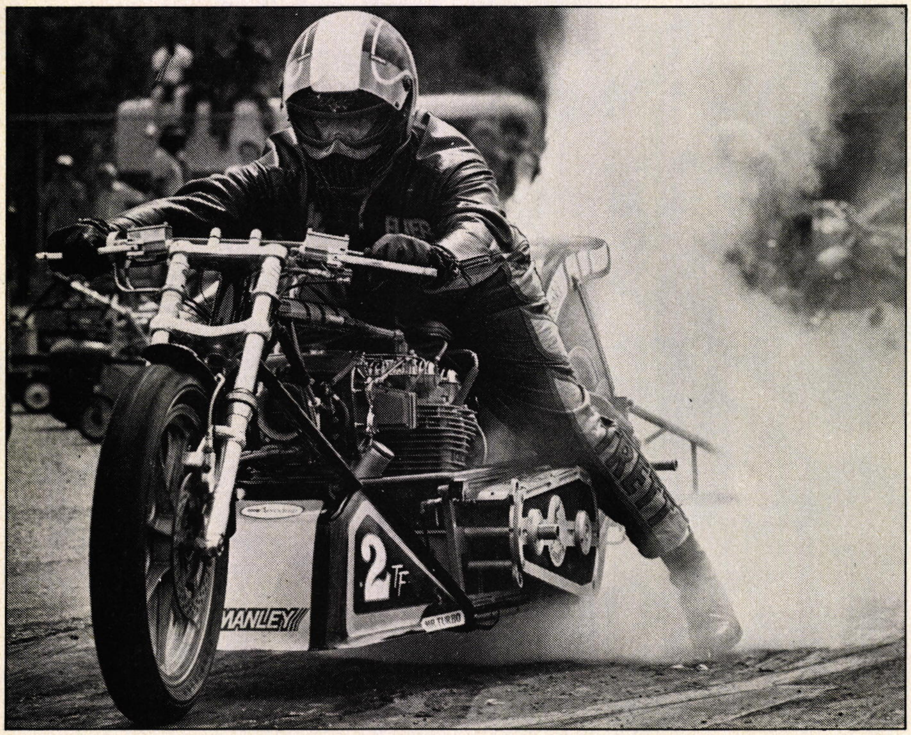
He closed the gap, but Randy Goss closed the door.

aboard his Kawasaki-powered Top Fueler by making an officially timed 200-mph run at the Indy Nationals. Trett's run doesn't make him an unqualified winner, however, because he failed to produce the 200-mph backup run necessary for a record.

- First time is a charm: Rider Terry Vance and tuner Byron Hines don't waste time. They set an NMRA Pro Stock record the first time out with their Honda CB1100F at Gainesville, Florida last March, then later in the year won the NMRA Pro Stock eliminations at Irvine, California with a Kawasaki. As it was with the Honda, the maiden flight for the Kaw was a winner.

Miscellaneous Losers:

- Chips are down: After retiring as speedway World Champion, Bruce Penhall went to Hollywood for further fame and fortune. After one season with Penhall as co-star of the CHiPs television program, he lost out when the show was cancelled.



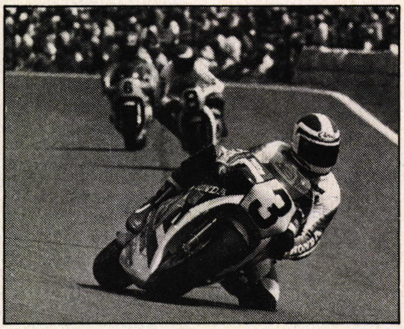
PHOTOGRAPHY © 1984 TOM RILES

Elmer Trett, preparing to explore where few men have ever gone before

His nitro-burning Kawasaki went 201 mph—once.

Pit Bits

- Weekends were made for Michelin: The Michelin Tire Company kept itself busy most weekends last year, and that activity paid off with four Grand Prix roadrace championships. The Michelin men, in their respective classes, are: Freddie Spencer/Honda, 500cc; Carlos Lavado/Yamaha, 250cc; Angel Nieto/Garelli, 125cc; and Stefan Dorflinger/Kreidler, 50cc. And on this side of the Atlantic, Mike Baldwin filled his weekends with Michelin, using a Honda RS500 to win the AMA Formula 1 title.



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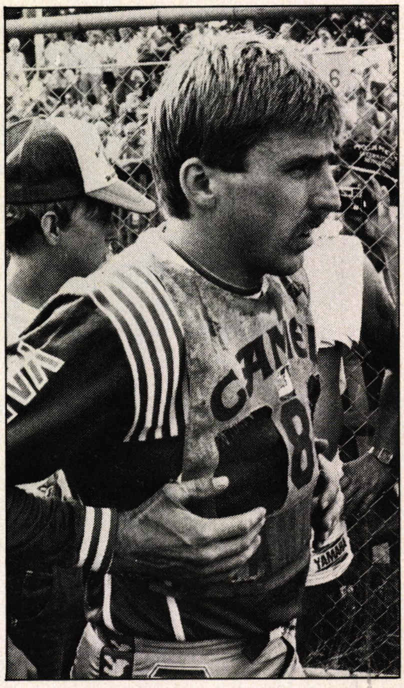
Freddie Spencer, Michelin Man

Racing where others feared to tread.

- Wrangler Dash: There will be $75,000 up for grabs in the inaugural Wrangler Dash, to be run during the AMA's opening Supercross race this year at the Seattle Kingdome, February 11–12. Dash-riders qualified based on their 1983 Supercross wins, and include David Bailey, Broc Glover, Jeff Ward, Mark



Hakan Carlqvist, World Champion

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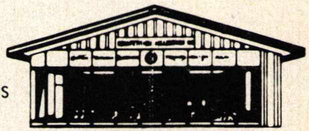

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Pit Bits

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Mark Barnett sails to first-heat win, and the Wrangler Dash

He comprises half of Team Suzuki for 1984.

Barnett, Bob Hannah, Ron Lechien and Johnny O'Mara. Wild-card slots are open to various other riders from outside the U.S., including 500cc World Champion Hakan Carlqvist and Canada's top MXer, Ross Pederson.

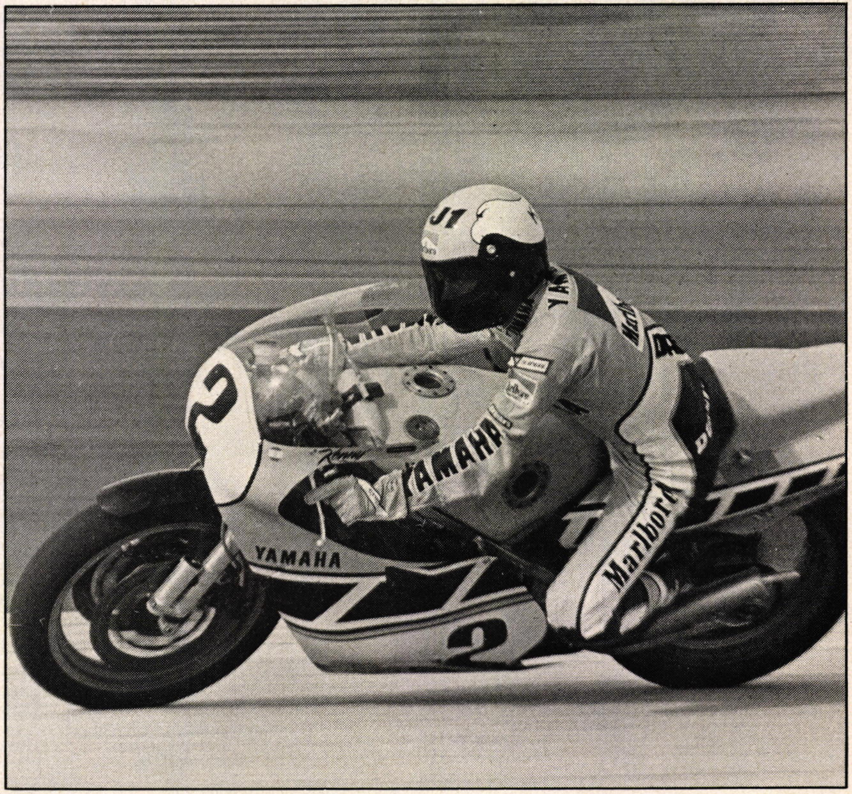
• Wrangler Cup Series: Wrangler Wear has altered its motocross sponsorship program slightly for the 1984 season. Now the AMA Grand National Motocross Championship will be known as the Wrangler Cup Series, with a point fund worth $75,000. And the WCS includes the entire Wrangler Supercross Series, which carries a purse of $50,000. So the totaled Wrangler fund will be worth $125,000 to top-placing riders by the end of the racing season.

• And then there were two: U.S. Suzuki has trimmed its motocross team to two riders for 1984. Mark Barnett (125cc and Supercross) will remain on the squad, as will Scott Burnworth (250cc and Supercross). Apparently Suzuki will forfeit the Open class.

• IDBA tops: The International Drag Bike Association's Tuner- and Rider-of-the-Year award winners are members of the same team. Bill Hahn won the top wrench award, while his rider, Bo O'Brochta, got the nod as IDBA's top rider of 1984.

• Meet the Challenge: The California Superbike School (CSS) will again promote the Superbike School Challenge, an invitational race open only to privateer riders. According to Keith Code of CSS, riders in the challenge will race the school's nearly stock Kawasaki GPz550s. The race schedule has been expanded from three to five events for this year, run at the following tracks: Elkhart Lake, Loudon, Laguna Seca, Sears Point and Mid-Ohio.

• King of England: Kenny Roberts hasn't made public his race plans for 1984, but he has hinted too many times about retiring. The rigorous schedule in Europe, he says, keeps him too long away from his children. Roberts has mentioned the idea of moving his children to England, so they can be closer to the place of his employment; but that was last year's talk. At a recent motorcycle dealer show, however, an industry insider casually asked Roberts about his 1984 plans, specifically directing the question to exactly where in England King Kenny had plans for a home. And without hesitation—not realizing that he was letting the cat out of the bag—Roberts replied before stopping in mid-sentence, "Well, I've already looked at places in . . ." —*Dain Gingerelli*



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Kenny Roberts in his American roadrace leathers

But if the rumors are true, he might yet wear English tweed.

MOTOCROSS:

U.S. versus Them

Who's King of the Berm?

• Belgian Georges Jobe takes an analytical approach to racing motocross, an approach that earned him the world championship in the 250cc class in 1980, and for 1983, as well. Jobe is a thinking rider; whenever he talks about racing, he digests the facts before he comments. So when Jobe was asked his opinion about American and European riders, he thought for several minutes before finally saying, "I do not want to say that Americans are crazy, but the Europeans are much less crazy."

Some people might call Jobe's response sour grapes, but American motocrossers *have* been doing rather well racing on the other side of The Pond the past couple of years. Americans have won both the Trophee and Motocross des Nations twice in the past two years, and have brought home two world championships, as well. They've also won the majority of stadium events Over There.

Danny LaPorte, America's 1982 250cc

Continued

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American Danny LaPorte won the 1982 250cc World Championship

Score one point for the stadium-bred Yankees.

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world champion analyzed the American/European situation another way: "Europeans feel like the Americans did six years ago; that they are the underdogs, and have to try harder to win." LaPorte distilled it even further when he said, "Americans are just more aggressive." Jobe agreed, saying, "They go wide-open."

That's become the United States' motocross style—wide-open. A quick throttle-hand, though, is no substitute for talent. And Belgium's five-time world champion, Roger DeCoster, who now works with American Honda's motocross team, believes the top riders—European and American—are almost equal in talent. "But the Americans have much more depth," said DeCoster, adding, "There are many young riders coming up over here (in the U.S.)." And you need only look at the infield of the Ponca City Mini-Nationals to understand DeCoster's point; the paddock contained a small armada of mini-motocross bikes, all ridden by the little-league racers.

But the preoccupation with indoor, Supercross-style racing in the U.S. might limit an American's riding abilities. For instance, DeCoster believes Americans have

David and Gary Bailey

Supercross teaches technique.

an edge in tight corners and jumps—Supercross terrain—while the Europeans hold the trump card in fast outdoor-style corners.

Bill Buchka, LaPorte's tuner, categorizes the riding techniques this way: "The Europeans' riding style is much more reserved. The Americans have an overwound style of motocross that works good in Supercross." And it's these two distinct styles, Buchka feels, that gives the Europeans an advantage in world championship racing. "The Europeans are much more consistent over a 45-minute moto," he said.

So who are the best motocross racers in the world, Americans or Europeans? Using the past two Trophee and Motocross des Nations events, the Amercians rank on top. But are two once-a-year team races a valid test? Buchka says no. "The Motocross and Trophee des Nations are single races; the Americans have a mini-America for them in Europe during those two weekends. Everything—their food, their living quarter—is catered to them," he said. And without the distractions normally associated with competition in a foreign country, the Yankees can concentrate on one thing—winning.

LaPorte, who was a member of America's 1981 des Nations-winning team sees things differently. He reflects some of Jobe's continental pragmatism by saying, "What or who exactly is the best rider? Since motocross racing is run over so many types of tracks, it's really hard to say just who is the *best.*"

Those are the words of a man who has been living—and racing—on both sides of the ocean; and the question remains.

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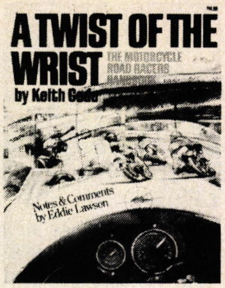
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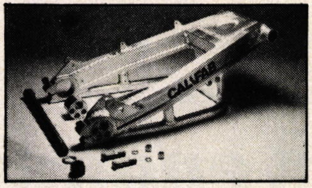

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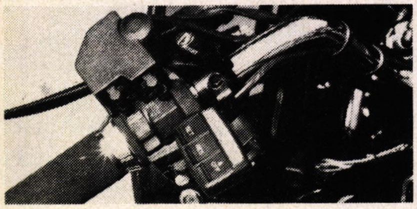

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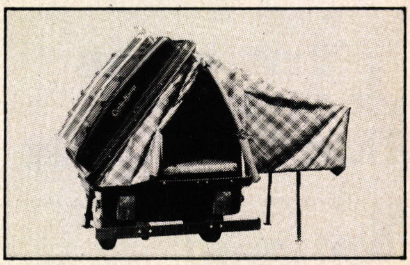

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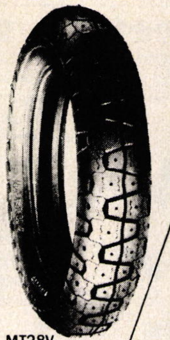

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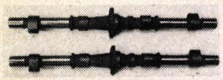

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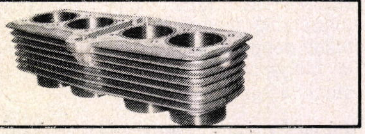

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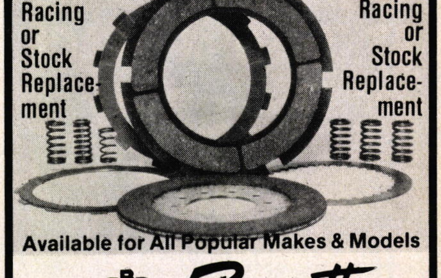

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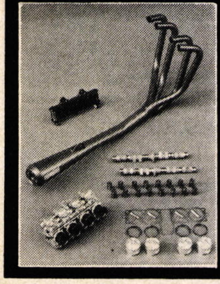

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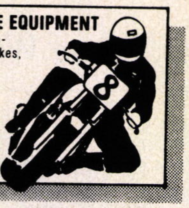

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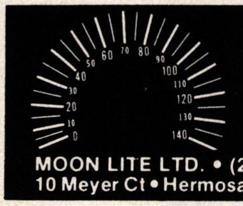

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LETTERS *Fast Bikes, Loose Women and Triumph Eulogy.*

HARLEY MIDDLEWEIGHT?

I was born in Muskogee, Oklahoma, so I consider myself just as much an American as anyone else. I read your letters section every month, and I'm really sick of the Harley riders putting people down because they don't ride Harleys. We don't ride foreign bikes to try and put the U.S. out of the motorcycle market. We ride them for the love of a good handling and performing bike. If Harley would make a bike that would stay with an intermediate-sized foreign bike (550—750) through a quarter-mile and through as good tight course a lot of guys, including me, would buy it. Oh, and keep the price under $6000.

Buddy Hughes
Broken Arrow, Oklahoma

Harley has heard this complaint for years, and you might be surprised at the response. Would you settle for a thumper?—ed.

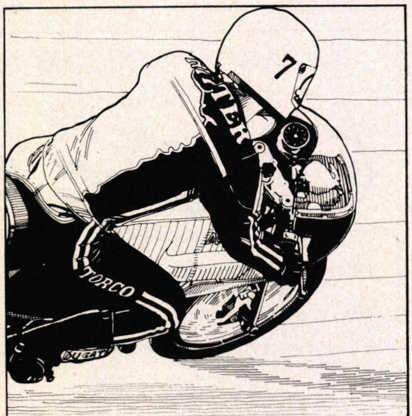
CANADIAN CONTRABAND

I recently took a trip to your fine country aboard my little Yamaha. Traveling through Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont I got a few curious looks. I wondered if it was because I was wearing black full-race leathers. Or was it my means of transportation, an RZ350LC, one of those so called Euro-spec wonder bikes not available in the U.S.?

Loved your article on the VF400F. If you ever want to test an RZ you may borrow mine.

Laurence Potter
Lunenburg County N.S.
Canada

Thanks for the offer, but there's no need to import an RZ anymore, so you Canadians can stop being so smug about it—ed.



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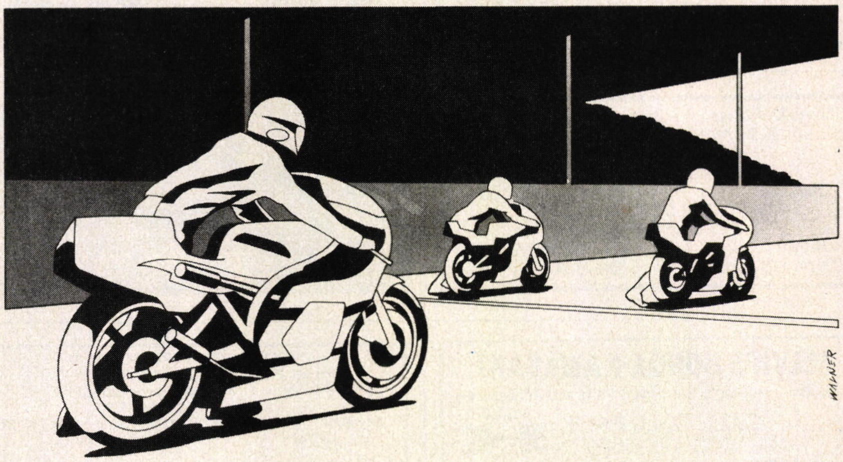

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GLORIFIED HONDAS

In your last issue I noticed some complaints in your letter section about being biased towards Honda motorcycles. I, too, must echo those sentiments. I think that you test too many Hondas, and that you over-glorify some of them. All I ask is a return to a more unbiased report on the motorcycles.

Charles J. Scappaticci
Chicago, Illinois

JUST THE FACTS

Perhaps your October 1983 issue ("The Fastest Streetbike Ever") will finally lay to rest the cries of those who allege that CYCLE GUIDE is biased in favor of Hondas. Your article on Speed Wars should bear out the fact that CYCLE GUIDE gives credit where credit is due, and gives its readers an impartial evaluation of motorcycles and other products.

Zachery E. Reynolds
Topeka, Kansas

Would you forward a copy of this letter to Scappaticci?—ed.

OUT OF THE HUNT

In your October issue you searched for the fastest and quickest streetbike. Your choice of five Japanese motorcycles astounds me. Do the Oriental manufacturer's spend more on your pages or provide more loose women at your parties? A 1983 Moto Guzzi Le Mans or any Laverda Jota is capable of speeds above 146 mph. If you have any doubts about this, *please* bring your Kawasaki over and I'll let you follow my Laverda down the boulevards. Some people don't care about stoplight-to-stoplight, they care about stateline-to-stateline. If you have decided to ignore European motorcycles as high-performance machines, please cancel my subscription.

Gregory A. Jones
Oklahoma City, Okla.

We didn't ignore European bikes. The Guzzi and the Laverda didn't make the first cut, because neither can pull 135 mph with stock gearing, let alone pull the 146 mph our winner did. We also used timing lights and dry lakebeds to find the top speeds, not speedometers and boulevards—ed.

MUDDLED RESULTS?

In your October edition you stated that you wanted to find "the fastest production motorcycle roaming the face of this earth. Bar none." By your definition of fastest, it's simply the bike with the highest top speed. May I point out that if your intentions were to find the fastest streetbike (and that's singular, not plural) you failed, since you had two with indentical top speeds. You even went so far as to say that if you want the king of speed, you want Kawasaki's 750 Turbo, the most potent production machine available. But then you go on to say that the two Kawasaki's have the exact same power output. And besides, the Honda is the fastest bike. If you take a look at the quarter-mile chart, you'll see that it has the highest terminal speed.

V.M. Latten
Charleston, South Carolina

The point was to find the bike with quickest acceleration and the highest top speed. The Honda had neither, and only one Kawasaki had both—ed.

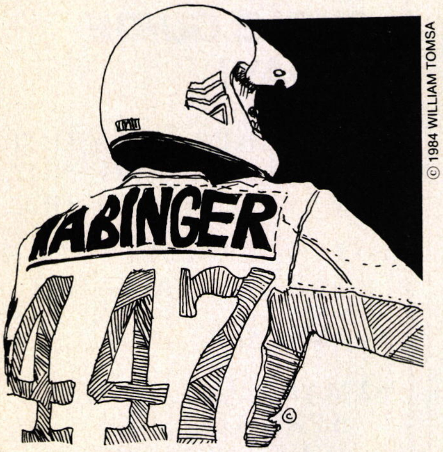
AIR-CONDITIONED VENTURE

Enough is enough!

You've all heard about the word "if." Well, IF Harley ever builds a four-cylinder bike and IF it's dependable and IF it doesn't leak oil and IF it has a drive shaft and IF it gets competitive with a Honda Wing, Royale, Voyager, I'll be down at my local dealer buying a Harley! Also Mr. Everitt: I rode my Royale to Montana last July with four friends on Gold Wings. The Wing riders blistered in the heat of South Dakota. Not me! Their comments on my Royale were: 1) It's one hell of a bike; 2) It makes my Wing feel like a tractor; 3) I won't ride it because I don't want to buy one; 4) Won't ride it because I'm scared I'll bend it. They all know.

Ellis Tobias
Moscow Mills, Missouri

We might agree on some points, but we rode our Venture to Laguna Seca last July and roasted on the way—ed.



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KING'S ENGLISH?

Referring to your November letters column: Actually, old boy, it's the Queen's English at the moment!

Julian R. Patton
Killarney, Manitoba

Fair enough, though we're not sure anyone would want to claim it anymore—ed.

120 MPH MB5?

I am trying to resolve an argument. A colleague at work maintains that Honda markets a 50cc motorcycle (for Europe only) that is capable of 120-mph plus top speed. I contend that to achieve this kind of speed a cycle would require around 60 BPH, depending on drag coefficient, rolling resistance, etc. This would mean that the engine in question would develop more than one horsepower per cc. I have tried to convince this person that such an output is totally unrealistic but to no avail! I would appreciate a reply from you on this matter so as to finally lay the argument to rest.

L.M. Davies
Huntsville, AL

The laws regarding motorcycles differ between Europe and the U.S., but the laws of physics don't. No way—ed.

REQUIESCAT IN PACE

In the November issue you mention that Triumph could FINALLY be out of business. Just what do you have against Triumph? I own two Triumphs and they are excellent bikes if you take care of them. I hope Triumph can keep it together and not go the way of Norton or BSA. After all, don't you think Japan has put too many people out of work already?

John Finney
Bay Village, Ohio

You've got us wrong. We don't like to see any company go under, particularly one with a tradition like Triumph's. But if the deal mentioned in RUMORS goes through, Triumph could be back—under a different flag—ed.

RABID TRANSIT TOUCH

In T.J. Rafferty's column "Eco-Racing" (October '83) he mentions the fact that eco-racers aren't suitable for normal travel, which brings the YBSW ("Yeah, But So What?") factor into play. Well, my vehicle *is* designed to be ridden in traffic and I regularly do just that. Squeezing out 252 mpg, good enough for third place at this year's Vetter Run, is only part of the fun—freaking out car drivers on the road as they try to figure out just what the hell that thing next to them is makes up the other part. Our Eco-racer also handles very well and can be ridden by any competent rider after a little familiarization.

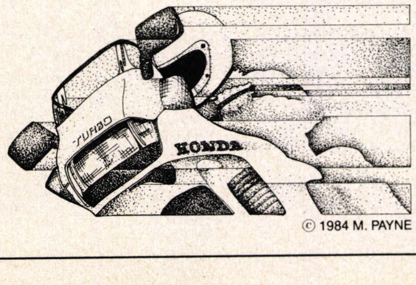
The top speed tests in the same issue ("Speed Wars") was also interesting, and a good indication of just what aerodynamics can do. The 139.15-mph speed for the GS1100ES Suzuki was particularly interesting to us because we had run a GS1100G (shaft-drive) Suzuki at El Mirage and went 129.55 mph. Our bike had 7000 miles on the spark plugs, with absolutely no engine work done at all, not even a tuneup. The bike had a Rabid Transit fairing, lowers and our prototype seat/luggage unit mounted. With just a little engine work, we could have had a full-on touring bike that was every bit as fast as a "Superbike."

The performance gains available with aerodynamic additions, both in mph and mpg, can be much more than people realize. Besides the top speeds obtained with the faired GS1100G, we gained 10.8 mpg in the 65-70 mph range after we installed the touring kit.

As an aside, consider this: Slip the Kawasaki 750 Turbo engine inside our Econo shell (yes, it will fit) and you would have an honest 200-mph street bike.

Matt Guzzetta
Don Vesco Products, Inc.
Lemon Grove, California

No, you slip that 750 Turbo into the Econo shell—we'll watch and take notes—ed.



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JAPANESE TRASH?

Frankly, I agree with Mr. Eugene Price, of Gainesville, Texas (Letters, September '83). Those Japanese bikes are just "throwaways." I own a 1981 GS750E, and in two short years I've had nothing but problems. I'm already on my third rear tire, the shocks gave out at 8000 miles and the brake pads had the audacity to wear out in just 13,000 miles. And if all that wasn't enough, as the odometer slid past the 16,800-mile mark I found myself in need of a new front tire. To top it all off, the engine's compression has dropped a full 1 percent from the original readings. Where will it all end?

Karl Fittingers
Stanton, California

Probably in 10 or 12 more years—ed.

MANHATTAN TRANSFER

This letter is in response to the rubbish written about Japanese "throwaway" bikes and the alleged longevity of Harley-Davidsons. I ride a 1977 KZ1000 back and forth to work in downtown Manhattan (106 miles round trip) five days a week in all kinds of weather. The Kawasaki has more than 40,000 miles on the odometer, yet still will show 130-plus mph on the speedometer. The bike averages 53 mpg.

I've been riding motorcycles for 21 years, 15 of those years on Triumphs, and I've never received the kind of trouble-free service from any of those bikes that I get from this Japanese "throwaway" model.

Robert Muzzo
Mahopeic, New York

Getting 40,000 miles out of anything ridden or driven in The Big Apple is tough to beat—ed. ●

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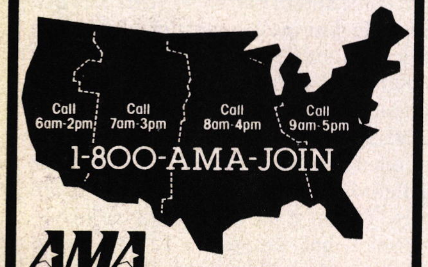

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